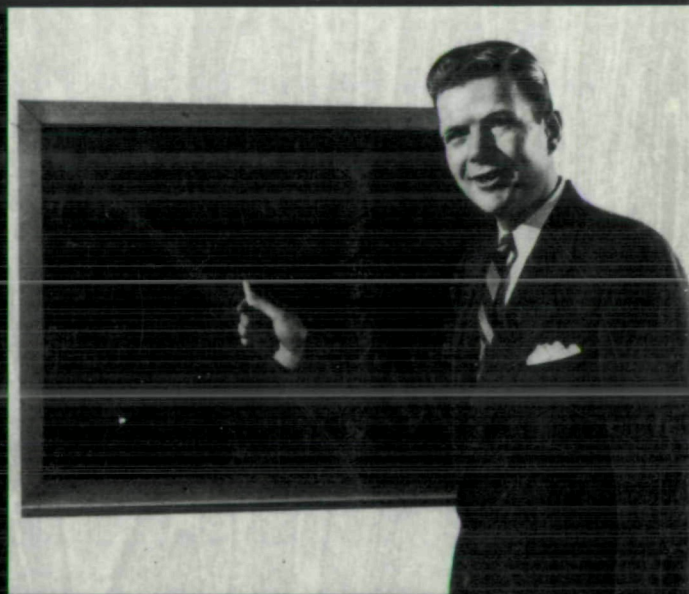


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Screen design award

The editors wish to congratulate Information Design Unit for their success in winning a runner-up award for the design of *Screen* in the prestigious 1991 Charlesworth Group Award for Typographical Excellence in Journal and Serial Production. The *Screen* design was identified as 'one of the more innovative designs submitted'.

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Opportunity knocks?

PAUL KERR

Over the last decade or so, television – which through the efforts of organizations like the Society for Education in Film and Television and the British Film Institute Education Department was becoming a hard-fought for part of the academic curriculum in Britain – began to be transformed into an attractive final address for the curriculum vitae itself. *There is nothing new, of course, in graduates applying for jobs in broadcasting – the connections between Oxbridge and the BBC, for instance, are as old as the Corporation itself.* The attraction of television as a career for those who had studied it as a subject, however, is necessarily as new as that subject's place on the syllabus. *Film studies never really confronted this problem, since it is, perhaps inevitably, a largely retrospective discipline, its academic emergence coinciding closely with the displacement of cinema as the most popular art.* Media/television studies, on the other hand, exist in the same present tense as television itself – which partially explains the (often exaggerated) *movement from theory to practice.* Quite simply, while there is no British film industry to speak of in which to work professionally, there is still a broadcasting industry – however increasingly fragmented it may be; indeed that fragmentation was initially to create rather than close up openings to those from outside the profession. *But have media studies – and media students – exercised any influence on television in general and television's cultural coverage in particular over the last decade? If so, is that influence likely to continue? Is it realistic for those in media studies to aspire to cultural change through working in television or is the point (to recoin a phrase) not 'change' but 'understanding'?*

Perhaps the most persuasive recent evidence for the influence of

media studies on – if not for an influx of media students into – broadcasting was the appointment, in May 1991, of Michael Jackson as the BBC's new Head of Music and Arts. Press profiles of Jackson tend to mention his degree in Media Studies at the Polytechnic of Central London and his having produced *Open The Box* (Channel Four, 1986), edited the first series of *The Media Show* (Channel Four, 1987–91) and launched BBC2's arts and media magazine *The Late Show* (1989–). And it is true that these three series were among the first to take popular culture and the mass media as seriously as high culture and traditional art forms have traditionally been taken.

In the seventies, the relationship between television and the academy could be characterized by mutual suspicion; this can be seen at its most polarized perhaps in the work of the Glasgow Media Group and the almost exclusively hostile responses to it of the television establishment. For most academics, the news was the only really important (read 'politically important') area for analysis, since that was where Politics with a capital P was reported. Meanwhile, for even the most sympathetic television professional, the academy was often little more than an interview location (in front of the ubiquitous bookcase) for the occasional pundit. And if there was one subject upon which academic comment was rarely if ever invited, it was television itself.

But this changed. During the seventies, media and cultural studies began to redefine their subjects. In television studies, for instance, cop shows and sitcoms, soaps and quiz shows gradually became legitimate areas of inquiry. In such inquiries these programme categories were initially 'problematized' for their implicit ideology, but later came to be more or less ambivalently and ambiguously celebrated as sites of popular and even 'progressive' pleasure. These debates were perhaps at their most advanced in film and television studies/media studies departments, and they seem to have first made themselves heard in television itself in programmes about the media, starting with Channel Four series like *Visions* (1982–5), *Open The Box* and *The Media Show* – not to mention programmes in the Open University's influential *Popular Culture* course.

Inside television arts programmes, similar shifts were also taking place. The arts programme originated (and is still predominantly associated) with the 'relay', the bringing of an artistic event live into viewers' homes.¹ Beyond this, there are three main strands of programming which television has developed for understanding the arts. These have been characterized as the profile, the (often dramatized) biography; and the television essay or lecture (which in extended form became the personal-view lecture series like Lord Clarke's *Civilization* [BBC2, 1969] or John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* [BBC2, 1972, repeated in 1973 and 1979]). The television 'portrait of the artist as a full length programme' is, in fact, forty years old.

¹ I have relied here on John Wyver's essay 'Representing art or reproducing culture? Tradition and innovation in British television's coverage of the arts (1950–87)' in Philip Hayward (ed.) *Picture This: Media Representations of Visual Art and Artists* (London: John Libbey 1988) pp. 27–45.

this year, the tradition having been initiated by John Read's documentary film study of Henry Moore. Read continued to make film profiles throughout the 1950s, refining the form with full length programmes about painters and sculptors including Stanley Spencer and L. S. Lowry. This tradition is today alive and well in programmes like *The South Bank Show* (London Weekend Television, 1978–) and *Omnibus* (BBC1, 1967–), as well as in numerous 'items' in arts magazine programmes.

Only rarely, however, have the institutions of the art world, of patronage, exhibition and marketing, the politics and economics of art, or sceptical critical approaches to art work been awarded airtime. In 1977, for instance, there were two *Omnibus* films about the art market entitled *For Love Or Money* – a title which is now being reused by Channel Four for its own regular art market strand on *Without Walls* (1990–) BBC2's recent series *Relative Values* (1991) had similar ambitions. Channel Four's *The Media Show* attempted to break down the barriers between high culture and low culture, and between fiction and non-fiction, in its (primarily audio-visual) mass media agenda; and BBC2's *Arena* (1976–) playfully puts paid to the naive window-on-the-world relay model of the arts programme with films about the reproducibility of popular cultural artefacts like the Ford Cortina or the song 'My Way' (though perhaps significantly this approach is less often applied to high cultural subjects – one notable exception being the edition devoted to the *Mona Lisa*). But after the initial excitement ignited by questioning what for too long had remained the unquestioned demarcation between Art and popular culture another question emerged: could this refreshing refusal of the 'great traditional' hierarchies of aesthetic value collapse into a crude cultural relativism?

One recent – and surprisingly critical – commentator on the relationship between the study of popular culture and television programme-making is John Ellis. The critical stance is surprising because Ellis was himself one of the first and most notable *émigrés* from the academy to become programme-makers for the new Channel Four with his cinema series, *Visions*. Writing about the appeal of arts television for those schooled in the popular-culture debate, in last spring's edition of *Modern Painters*, Ellis writes:

A generation of students, many in the expanding field of media studies, was given the distinct impression that anything was now OK. Off they went to become researchers on *The Late Show*.²

Long before *The Late Show*, however, other arts programmes had been the televisual sites in which some of these ideas – and some of the people associated with them – had first touched down. These included John Ellis's own Channel Four cinema series, *Visions*, which tried to jettison the customary cultural apartheid of such

2 John Ellis, 'Television and the arts: another fine mess', *Modern Painters*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1991), pp. 60–1

programmes by combining profiles of the avant garde and third-world national cinemas with analyses of popular mainstream cinema; *Open The Box*, the six-part documentary series about popular television, also for Channel Four, which grew out of work done by the BFI; *The Media Show*, which was launched in March 1987 and at the time of writing (May 1991) has only just been cancelled, *Signals* (1989) and *Without Walls* on Channel Four; and Ellis's *bête noir*, BBC2's *The Late Show*. Meanwhile other arts programmes like *The South Bank Show*, *Omnibus* and *Arena*, all occasionally – and probably increasingly – devote editions to popular as opposed to high cultural art and artists.

But how did the popular culture debate find its way into television? Television may have a relative autonomy from politics, but the degree of that relativity has been very visibly chipped away over the last decade. For television has been by no means immune from the political culture – or indeed the cultural politics – of that decade. Pressures on revenue/ratings for commercial television have combined with an obligation on the BBC to be seen to be serving a more significant proportion of the population (in order to legitimate the increasingly controversial licence fee) while the shortlived consumer boom targeted youth and its own popular culture as an important audience. Meanwhile, at the institutional level, one crucial development was the advent of Channel Four, which had been set up not only with a brief for innovation in the form and content of at least some of its programmes, but also with a commitment to an expansion of the range of voices and faces by whom and for whom television was made. By taking popular culture and non-mainstream cultures seriously and commissioning series specifically devoted to film and television respectively like *Visions* and *Open The Box* (both of which had roots of one kind or another in education), Channel Four did begin to expand the arts agenda. This was the result of the argument for access which had been growing inside broadcasting since the early 1970s.

The idea of access itself was born out of the collapse of the postwar political consensus. With its collapse, the idea of the mass audience and of the supposedly consensual opinions which it shared also began to be dented. Querying the presumed equation between that mass audience and public service, critics argued that by ignoring the constituent minority audiences of which that mass was made, such a strategy served only the common denominator. They demanded access for the voices of those excluded from the predominantly white, male, middle-class, heterosexual bastions of broadcasting. At first the consensus that was seen to be breaking down was assumed to be primarily political. But it was soon revealed to be cultural too.

The extension of the range of faces and voices seen and heard on television became part of the argument taken up by the proponents

of a fourth channel on the analogy of a publisher to whom anyone could bring a programme idea. Thus, when Channel Four went on air in November 1982, the independent sector which has provided it with many of its programmes was only partly staffed by people who had previously worked for the BBC or ITV. Some of these outsiders came from corporate filmmaking and advertising; and some were from independent cinema and the avant garde. But some were 'amateurs', for whom programme-making was a new profession; and among those keen to practise it were some students – and teachers – of media studies. The dubious analogy of Channel Four with publishing – and thus of the independent producer with an author – may have contributed to the appeal of the television industry to those used to working in a print-dominated medium.

The publishing analogy is flattering but fallacious. It pretends that an industry where most of the money is spent once the product is, in a sense, complete (that is when the book is written) can be compared with another in which the money must be available up-front or there can be no product at all. But costs of entry into the two media could not be more different. In the confusion which the analogy invites lies the curious mixture of populism and privatization, welfarism (in the programme agenda and programme-maker attitudes of many of the early independents) and antiwelfarism (in the business strategies of many of those independents which survived the first few years of their existence) which has always characterized the channel. A much vaunted deregulation of the restrictive forms of entry into the television industry, and of working methods in it (Mrs Thatcher's famous 'last bastion of restrictive practices' remark was addressed to ITV), as well as of the programme conventions of the medium, has been more than matched by the reregulation of content in the form of the Independent Television Commission, Broadcasting Standards Commission and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission. In the late 1980s the commercial end of the broadcasting industry has been further deregulated from a 'social market', more or less carefully balancing profitability with public service, to simple entrepreneurship.

What does not seem to have occurred to many of the pioneer independents was that one result of their polemic would be the setting up of production companies which had to be at least as concerned about sustaining their commercial independence as they were with the independence of their ideas. And of course once nonprofessionals are given the opportunity to make programmes one of two things usually happens. Either they quickly become professionalized or equally quickly they find themselves trying to get their old jobs back.

Thus, by the late 1980s, the once-open doors of the television institutions were again closing, though the imposition of a mandated

twenty-five per cent of programmes from independent producers on both BBC and ITV kept the indies afloat, and the launch of British Satellite Broadcasting and Sky briefly maintained a turnover in jobs in the industry. But the 1990s have already brought a succession of serious blows, including an advertising recession in ITV and Channel Four, the merger of BSB and Sky, cutbacks at the BBC faced with a low-level licence fee and the need to hive off twenty-five per cent of programming; cutbacks at Channel Four in preparation for selling its own advertising time; and cutbacks in the ITV companies as a consequence of their bids for the new Channel Three licences and a concomitant slowdown in job mobility as the so-called golden handcuffs for top ITV talent and a simultaneous slimming down of the rest of staffing had a knock-on effect on the rest of the industry.

The agenda of television's cultural coverage has undoubtedly expanded, partly at least in response to shifts in academia and cultural journalism, partly as a response to larger forces of which both shifts are symptoms. But while academic analyses of the forms and contents of programming may have exerted an influence, the historical prioritization of text over industrial context in both film and television studies may have undermined that influence – just as it seems to have failed to alert many of us to the institutional shifts which opened and are now closing up those opportunities. Meanwhile, although arts programmes (with their increasing interest in mass media and popular culture) will continue to be broadcast on both the BBC and channels Three and Four for the foreseeable future, as part of their obligations to 'Public service' and 'Quality' respectively, both the resources and the space for critical/nonconsensual approaches and agendas are likely to diminish. So too, I suspect, are the number of jobs – particularly for those interested in making what contributors to *Screen* used to call an intervention.

In national and international politics, too, the climate is perhaps less auspicious for cultural programming than it was two or three years ago. The early 1989 launches of both *The Late Show* and *Signals* were accompanied, interestingly, by press interviews with their respective editors in which both characterized the late eighties as a period of political paralysis or stasis; the implication of this appears to be that culture had become (or had to be coerced into becoming) a continuation of politics by other means. Hence the respectability of cultural politics. In the 1980s the apparent permanence of the Thatcher government and its commitment to so-called popular capitalism placed the consumer (rather than the voter) at the centre of the political agenda and the politics of popular consumption became a legitimate area of analysis. Now that (political) history can be seen quite clearly not to have come to an end, while Thatcherism itself has been at least partly supplanted, the centrality of culture to the agenda seems much less certain. It

remains to be seen whether the numerous arts programmes which appeared in the latter half of the 1980s and the early 1990s will survive the return of dramatic political events to the front pages (for example, the collapse of Eastern Europe and the Gulf War).

Pedagogies of the feminine: feminist teaching and women's genres

CHARLOTTE BRUNSDON

Introduction

When I told her the title of this essay, a friend said, 'You mean when you put lots of ribbons and bows in your hair before you go out and lecture.' She was, as usual, quite right, as I want to discuss practices of teaching, and to argue against some of the ways in which feminism seems to be appearing in film and media studies classrooms. It is the lurking opposition between the 'ribbons and bows' of femininity, and what is entailed in feminist teaching, which structures both this essay and the academic field which I discuss.

I want to reflect on a decade of teaching 'women's genres', the new feminist canons of femininity which have become partly institutionalized in the 1980s. My argument will be that there are features of the historically very rapid canon formation which lead to particular pedagogic problems. These can partly be understood as problems of tone and history, in that this field of study, which I outline in more detail below, has been mainly established through avowedly political criticism which has often had the implicit critique of conventional femininities installed as centrally as the more explicit critique of patriarchy. Much early feminist media criticism involved a passionate repudiation of the pleasures of consumption which, by extension, morally rebuked those who consumed.

The main theoretical issues in the teaching of 'women's genres', though, are the (historical) understanding of femininity, feminine cultures and gender identity, and the articulation of these identities and cultures with ideas of power. These are problems for both textual-institutional study and pedagogic practice, and can be posed

as such simultaneously. For example, my teaching experience makes me very uneasy about the way in which gender identity can become 'renaturalized' in the classroom. That is, consciousness about the asymmetries of gendered experience (and divisions within the categories of gender), that every reader/viewer, for example, is not a 'he' or 'white', can boomerang, confining students, particularly female students, to a position of difference which may be the more difficult to transcend/transgress for all the sophistication of its theorization. Despite all those long battles to get 'women' on the syllabus, the benefits to female students can be rather mixed if it is only as a natural and self-evident pedagogic category that 'women' do appear. I wish finally to move from this discussion of identity politics in the classroom to suggest that some of these points have implications for feminism as we have known it in the 1970s and 1980s.

The canon is coming

Since the late 1970s, it has been increasingly possible to design and teach courses which include some study of film melodrama, television soap opera and the 'woman's picture'. If early feminist work on the media concentrated on images of women, often focusing on advertising, as well as making reference to these genres, there is a shift in the later 1970s towards increased consideration of images for women.¹ The reasons for this shift are complex and various, but within the literature recurrent interest is expressed in: media genres and forms with mass appeal to women, the representation of, and identification with, central female protagonists; female desire; narrative modes and rhythms specific to femininity; and the position of the female spectator. The title of Annette Kuhn's 1984 article, 'Women's genres', nicely catches the multiple inscription of women in, and in relation to, these films and television programmes.²

There is now in existence a recognizable, if heterogeneous, feminist field of study, which, following Kuhn, we can call 'women's genres', with several different, traceable formations. It is not my purpose here to discuss the extent to which this crossmedia field of study is, or should be, regarded as canonical, nor to discuss canon formation in general.³ There does, however, seem now, in the 1990s, to be a *de facto* field of study that might be termed mass cultural fictions of femininity; and I want to reflect on the experience of teaching this material. To this end I will initially try to sketch the field from three different starting points: audiovisual texts; publications; and finally, through what I take to be the theoretical core of the field, the debates over the understanding of the female viewer. The three different starting points give different,

1 A comparison of one of the earliest women and the media anthologies, Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels and James Benet (eds) *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) with later collections such as Mary Ellen Brown (ed.), *Television and Women's Culture* (London: Sage, 1989) makes this point.

2 Annette Kuhn, 'Women's genres', *Screen* vol. 25, no. 1 (1984) pp. 18-28.

3 Janet Staiger, 'The politics of film canons', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 24, no. 3 (1985), pp. 4-23 offers some discussion of the role of feminist criticism in canon formation.

but overlapping, outlines, which are offered as provisional – something to work with – rather than definitive.

(1) *Audio-visual texts* The term 'audiovisual' yokes together different disciplines and textualities. Thus the study of 'women's genres' on television has, until recently, effectively been the study of soap opera, which has a long history within mass communications with which the newer feminist work has hardly engaged.⁴ The early feminist research on soap opera was often conducted in the context of inquiry into 'the housewife's day'. Thus Carol Lopate discusses US daytime soaps in a more general discussion of the rhythms and preoccupations of daytime television,⁵ while Dorothy Hobson's work on *Crossroads* (Central, 1964–88) emerged from earlier research on the daily culture of young working-class women at home.⁶ Concerns with domestic time, rhythm, and the engaged role of the viewer recur in the work of Modleski, Seiter and Mattelart.⁷ Kaplan, indeed, to slightly different ends, uses Kristeva's periodization of 'women's time' to structure her history of feminist television criticism.⁸ This initial focus, on ways and rhythms of viewing, rather than detailed textual analysis, could be seen to characterize feminist approaches to television domestic serial drama. Thus, although there is detailed work on *Coronation Street* (Granada, 1961–), *Dallas* (CBS/Lorimar, US, 1978–), *Dynasty* (ABC/Aaron Spelling, 1981–), *General Hospital* (ABC, US, 1963–) and *Brookside* (Channel Four, 1982–), the overarching concerns do seem to have been more with the involvement and pleasures of female viewers in the patterns of domestic viewing.⁹ There is also a body of work on sitcoms which is rather less concerned with patterns of viewing, and includes Pat Mellencamp's work on Lucille Ball, Serafina Bathrick on Mary Tyler Moore and Lauren Rabinovitz on *Kate and Allie* (Mort Lackman/Alan Landsburg, US, 1984–).¹⁰ Although there are clear affinities with the soap work, these programmes seem rather more tangentially related to the core concerns of 'women's genres', basically because they offer laughter rather than tears.

In relation to the cinema, the field can be marked out through individual films, genres and various subgenres and cycles. Thus certain films have been the subject of particular debates, such as that about maternity and spectatorship in relation to the 1937 version of *Stella Dallas*,¹¹ or that about fantasy and the female consumer/spectator for *Now Voyager* (1942).¹² Others, as with Mulvey on *All That Heaven Allows* (1959), have been used in influential theoretical formulations.¹³ Films such as *Mildred Pierce* (1945) and *Coma* (1977), generically more hybrid, have long histories in debates about women protagonists, generic constitutions of femininity and the role of the melodramatic.¹⁴ None of the quite extensive available material on *Mildred Pierce* discusses Lotte (Butterfly McQueen), which points to the problematic role of

- 4 Robert C. Allen surveys some of the mass communications research on soap opera, *Speaking of Soap Operas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).
- 5 Carol Lopate 'Day-time television: you'll never want to leave home', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 4, no. 6 (1976), pp. 70–82.
- 6 Dorothy Hobson, *Crossroads: The Drama of a Soap Opera* (London: Methuen, 1982). A report on the earlier research can be found in 'Housewives: isolation as oppression' in Women's Studies Group (ed.), *Women Take Issue* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), pp. 79–95.
- 7 Tania Modleski, 'The search for tomorrow in today's soap operas', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 1 (1979), pp. 12–21; Ellen Seiter 'The role of the woman reader: Eco's narrative theory and soap operas', *Tabloid*, no. 6 (1982), pp. 35–43; Michele Mattelart, 'Women and the cultural industries', trans. Keith Reader, *Media Culture and Society*, vol. 4, no. 4 (1981), pp. 133–51.
- 8 E. Ann Kaplan, 'Feminist criticism and television', in Robert C. Allen (ed.), *Channels of Discourse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 211–52.
- 9 Richard Dyer et al., *Coronation Street* (London: British Film Institute, 1981); Jane Feuer, 'Melodrama, serial form and television today', *Screen*, vol. 25, no. 1 (1984), pp. 4–16; Mark Finch 'Sex and address in *Dynasty*', *Screen*, vol. 27, no. 6 (1986), pp. 24–42; Sandy Fitterman-Lewis 'All's well that doesn't end: soap operas and the marriage motif', *Camera Obscura*, no. 16 (1988), pp. 119–29; Christine Geraghty 'Brookside – no common ground', *Screen*, vol. 24, nos. 4–5, pp. 137–41.

- 10 Patricia Mellencamp, 'Situation comedy, feminism and Freud discourses of Grace and Lucy', in Tania Modleski (ed.), *Studies in Entertainment* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986) pp. 80–98, Serafina Bathrick, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* women at home and at work, in Jane Feuer et al. (eds) *MTM 'Quality Television'* (London: British Film Institute, 1984), pp. 99–131, Lauren Rabinovitz, 'Sitcoms and single moms: representations of feminism on American TV', *Cinema Journal* vol. 29, no. 1 (1989), pp. 3–19.
- 11 E. Ann Kaplan, 'The case of the missing mother: maternal issues in Vidor's *Stella Dallas*', *Heresies*, no. 16 (1983), pp. 81–5, Linda Williams, 'Something else besides a mother', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1984), pp. 2–27, and debate in subsequent issues of *Cinema Journal*.
- 12 Elizabeth Cowie, 'Fantasia', *m/f* no. 9 (1984), pp. 70–105. Maria LaPlace, 'Producing and consuming the Woman's Film', in Christine Gledhill (ed.), *Home is where the Heart is* (London: British Film Institute, 1987), pp. 138–66, Lea Jacobs, 'Now Voyager: some problems of enunciation and sexual difference', *Camera Obscura* no. 7 (1981), pp. 89–104.
- 13 Laura Mulvey, 'Notes on Sirk and melodrama', *Movie* no. 25 (1977), pp. 53–6.
- 14 Ginette Vincendeau has recently argued that the history of feminist film criticism can be traced through readings of *Mildred Pierce*, 'Mildred Pierce and feminist film criticism', unpublished paper, University of Warwick, 1990. Christine Gledhill indicates that she has chosen to offer an analysis of *Coma* because it has already been substantially discussed by other feminist critics, see 'Pleasurable negotiations', in E. Deidre Pribram (ed.), *Female Spectators* (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 74–5.
- 15 Aniko Bodroghkozy has demonstrated that Universal

ethnicity in this corpus. The women of 'women's genres' are generally white women. Thus, for example, *Imitation of Life* (1959), clearly recognized on its release date as dealing with 'the color problem', has until recently mainly been written about as 'mothers and daughters' within a 'Sirkian excess' framework.¹⁵ Consciousness of the ethnocentricity of the canon leading, for example, to the rather ambiguous status of *Gone with the Wind* (1939),¹⁶ has arguably led to the rather perverse addition of *The Color Purple* to the list of frequently studied individual films, in that it is very often used in courses to raise issues of ethnic voice (the film/book comparison), and, because of Jacqueline Bobo's work, issues of spectatorship.¹⁷

Thus, while one way of looking at the significant audiovisual texts of 'women's genres' produces a series of individual films as nodal points in a series of debates about spectatorship, consumption, identification and finally ethnicity, another way foregrounds the historical research on different genres and film cycles. This research, most of it listed in figure 1 (pp. 368–9), or represented in Gledhill, has focused on US 1940s 'women's pictures'; British Gainsborough Studios; US 1930s 'fallen woman' cycle; US 1950s colour melodramas; and 1970s 'independent woman' films. With the historical work on the female spectator discussed below, this research is slowly transforming the wider historical field, as can be seen from recent histories of the Weimar cinema.¹⁸ Similarly, feminist analyses of individual films such as *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophüls, 1948), *Caught* (Max Ophüls, 1949) and *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940) alter the critical profile of their directors.¹⁹

(u) *Publications*: Evidently, it is through publications that I construct both my first and third outlines of the field, in that it is through the reports of conference debates, journal articles and book reviews, that the changing contours of discussion can be traced. When addressed directly, Annette Kuhn's 1984 article, which surveys material on both film and television, appears formative.²⁰ Since Kuhn surveyed the field in 1984, there has been a rapid expansion of work in this area, which is shown by the chronology of published books presented as Figure 1. Listing only books creates various chronological distortions and omissions, but has some justification in terms of the availability necessary for canon formation. Kuhn could refer to only four books in this area, one of which – the British Film Institute dossier on Gainsborough melodrama – was not available for retail sale. Subsequently, Modleski's *Loving with A Vengeance*, at that stage published only in hardback by the Shoestring Press in the United States, was picked up by Methuen (now Routledge) in 1985, and there has been a considerable expansion of the literature on soap opera, including Ien Ang's book *Watching Dallas*,

FIGURE 1

Books published in the field of Women's Genres, 1981–90

1981

–Dyer, Geraghty, Lovell, Jordan, Paterson, Stewart, *Coronation Street* (London: British Film Institute).

1982

–Dorothy Hobson, *Crossroads. The Drama of a Soap Opera* (London: Methuen).

–Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance* (Hamden: Shoestring Press); includes Modleski's 1979 essay, 'The search for tomorrow in today's soap operas'.

1983

–Sue Aspinall and Robert Murphy (eds), *Gainsborough Melodrama* (London: British Film Institute Dossier no. 18).

–Muriel G. Cantor and Suzanne Pingree, *The Soap Opera* (Beverly Hills: Sage).

–Mary Cassata and Thomas Skill (eds), *Life on Daytime Television* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex).

1984

–Peter Buckman, *All for Love* (London: Secker and Warburg)

–Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp and Linda Williams, *Re-Vision* (Los Angeles: American Film Institute); includes essays by Gledhill, Mayne and Doane.

–Michael Intintoli, *Taking Soaps Seriously* (New York: Praeger).

–Andrea S. Walsh, *Women's Film and Female Experience 1940–1950* (New York: Praeger).

–[Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press)]

–[Rosalind Coward, *Female Desire* (London: Paladin).]

1985

–Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (London: Methuen); trans Della Couling; first published as *Het Geval Dallas* in 1982 (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SUA)

–Robert C. Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press)

–Pam Cook (ed.), *The Cinema Book* (London: British Film Institute); section on melodrama

1986

–Michele Mattelart, *Women, Media, Crisis* (London: Comedia); includes 1981–2 essays on telenovelas first published in French.

–Charlotte Brunsdon (ed.), *Films for Women* (London: British Film Institute).

–[Jean Radford, *The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul)]

–[Cora Kaplan, *Sea Changes* (London: Verso); reprints essays on *The Thorn Birds* and *The Color Purple*]

1987

–Helen Baehr and Gillian Dyer (eds), *Boxed In: Women and Television* (London: Pandora).

–David Buckingham, *Public Secrets: EastEnders and its Audience* (London: British Film Institute)

- Mary Anne Doane, *The Desire to Desire. The Women's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).
- Christine Gledhill (ed.), *Home is where the Heart is Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (London: British Film Institute).
- [Janice Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines* (London Pandora)]
- [Rosemary Betterton (ed.), *Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media* (London: Pandora).]
- [Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance* (British edition with new preface published by Verso)]

1988

- Denise Mann and Lynn Spigel (eds), *Camera Obscura*, no 16, 'Television and the Female Consumer'.
- Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment (eds), *The Female Gaze. Women as Viewers of Popular Culture* (London: The Women's Press)
- Hilary Kingsley, *Soap Box* (London. Macmillan)
- Marilyn Matelski, *The Soap Opera Evolution* (Jefferson, NC McFarland).
- E. Deidre Pribram (ed.), *Female Spectators* (London Verso).

1989

- Robert Lang, *American Film Melodrama* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Basingstoke: Macmillan); reprints 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' (1975) and essays on melodrama
- Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner and Eva Maria Warth (eds), *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power* (London Routledge).
- Helen Taylor, *Scarlett's Women: Gone with the Wind and its Female Fans* (London: Virago)
- [Ella Taylor, *Prime-Time Families* (Berkeley: University of California Press).]

1990

- Janet Bergstrom and Mary Ann Doane (eds), *Camera Obscura*, nos 20-1, 'Special Issue on the Female Spectator The Spectatrix' (dated 1989, published and copyright 1990)
- Mary Ellen Brown, *Television and Women's Culture* (London: Sage).
- Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, *Fabrications. Costume and the Female Body* (New York and London: Routledge).
- Christine Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera* (Oxford: Polity Press).
- Pribram reprinted
- Gledhill reprinted.

Notes

This is not an attempt to survey feminist film and television criticism generally but to give some sense of the publication of books in the area 'women's genres' Thus most of the standard 'women and film' publications are omitted, as are works which concentrate on female authorship and other genres, such as science fiction I have excluded most works, mainly on soap opera within US mass communications, which do not engage with feminist critical paradigms However, I have included, in square brackets, feminist work about women's genres in other media, such as women's magazines and romance fiction

Listing only book-length publications, which has some justification at the level of canon formation as well as because of the constraint of space, omits several key contributions, such as those of Elizabeth Cowie, E Ann Kaplan and Annette Kuhn, and nearly all work on the lesbian spectator It also seriously distorts the chronology of certain debates, in that many articles have their most formative impact before they appear in anthologies or 'collected works' For example, as the anthology itself reveals, much of the groundwork for Gledhill's influential 1987 anthology is done in the late 1960s and early 1970s, particularly by Thomas Elsaesser I have thus tried to indicate the original date of publication of key articles There are extensive bibliographies in Allen (1986), Gledhill (1987) and *Camera Obscura*, nos 20-1

marketed the film in 1959 with clear consciousness of the 'race' angle, offering different advertising campaigns in the US South 'Imitation of Life in black and white' marketing strategies and critical reception of the 1959 version, unpublished paper, University of Wisconsin-Madison 1991 More recent work includes Marina Heung, 'What's the matter with Sara Jane (sic)?' *Cinema Journal* vol. 26, no. 3 (1987), pp. 21-43, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis 'Discourses of desire and difference', paper presented at the June 1991 Screen Studies Conference

16 Helen Taylor *Scarlett's Women* (London: Virago 1989), Alice Walker 'A letter of the times or should this sado masochism be saved?' in *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (London: The Women's Press, 1982), pp. 118-23

17 Jacqueline Bobo *The Color Purple* Black women as cultural readers, in Pribram (ed.), *Female Spectators* pp. 90-109 Andrea Stuart, *The Color Purple* in defence of happy endings' in Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment (eds) *The Female Gaze* (London: The Women's Press 1988) pp. 60-75

18 Petro has recently argued for the importance of feminist textual analysis in the project of film history 'Feminism and film history', *Camera Obscura* no. 22 (1990) pp. 9-26

19 Cowie Fantasia Tania Modleski, 'Time and desire in the Woman's Film' in Gledhill (ed.) *Home is where the Heart is*, pp. 326-38, Mary Ann Doane 'Caught and Rebecca' the inscription of femininity as absence', *enclitic*, vol. 5, no. 2/vol. 6 no. 1 (1981-2) pp. 75-89, Tania Modleski, *The Woman Who Knew Too Much* (New York: Methuen 1988)

20 Kuhn 'Women's genres' pp. 18-28

21 Ien Ang *Watching Dallas* (London: Methuen 1985)

22 Robert C. Allen *Speaking of Soap Operas* (Chapel Hill

translated from the Dutch and now in its second edition,²¹ Robert C. Allen's *Speaking of Soap Opera*,²² David Buckingham's *Public Secrets*²³ and, most recently, Christine Geraghty's *Women and Soap Opera*.²⁴ The late 1980s have seen the publication of several anthologies and collections of essays, such as those by Pribram and Gledhill, both of which are now in their second editions.²⁵ Gledhill in particular has consciously addressed herself to the issue of both feminist and film-studies canons, arguing for the significance of the historical understanding of the melodramatic mode to both.²⁶ Arguably, however, the single most significant contribution to the field, apart from Christine Gledhill's explicit project of canon formation and Mary Ann Doane's study of women's films of the 1940s, has been Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance*, published in the US in 1984, and in Britain, with a new introduction, in 1987.²⁷ Although dealing with paperback fiction rather than film or television, the methodological breadth and its paradigmatic set of concerns (popular fiction – feminism – reading – ordinary women) has given this book an impact outside its original disciplinary home of American Studies.

In the period of the chronology, the status of these genres in the academy has changed, and many film, television and media-studies courses now deal with these and related media genres and forms such as girls' teenage comics, women's magazines and popular romance fiction. In the same period, these genres have appeared elsewhere in the academy at all levels, from schools to universities, in 'decanonized' English and Art History, 'modernizing' European languages and History, as well as in the newer, more unstable, field of Cultural Studies.

In addition to the presence of these texts on an increasing number of syllabuses, there have been clear shifts in the ways in which the object of study has been conceptualized which register both academic and political debates. The most noticeable moves, apart from the general, if fiercely contested, loosening and leavening of the canons of many disciplines within the humanities, are away from the study of text to the study of audience, within a general revaluation of cultures of consumption.²⁸ It is on these grounds that I want finally to outline these fields of study through the emerging role of the female viewer in film and television studies since 1975.

(iii) *The female viewer since 1975* 1975 is the year in which Laura Mulvey's essay, 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' was first published, it thus forms a widely recognized 'inaugural moment' in the study of the female viewer.²⁹ Endorsing the widely recognized significance of Mulvey's essay on the study of gendered spectatorship is not to collapse film and television viewing, and the paradigms within which they have been constituted, but to recognize that it was Mulvey's posing of the issue of gendered spectatorship in

- University of North Carolina Press 1985)
- 23 David Buckingham *Public Secrets* (London: British Film Institute, 1987)
- 24 Christine Geraghty *Women and Soap Opera* (Oxford: Polity Press 1990)
- 25 Pribram *Female Spectators* Gledhill *Home is where the Heart is*
- 26 See Gledhill, introduction to *Home is where the Heart is* pp 1-39
- 27 Mary Ann Doane *The Desire to Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1987), Janice Radway *Reading the Romance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984)
- 28 I have argued this point at more length in 'Text and audience' in Ellen Seiter et al (eds), *Remote Control* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp 116-29
- 29 Laura Mulvey 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' *Screen* vol 16, no 3 (1975) pp 6-18 Jane Gaines in a review of Mulvey's collection *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Macmillan, 1989) listed six other reprints of this article, *Screen*, vol 32 no 1 (1991), pp 109-13
- 30 Andreas Huyssen, 'Mass culture as woman modernism's other' in *After the Great Divide* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1986), pp 44-62 Patrice Petro, 'Mass culture and the feminine: the "place" of television in Film Studies', *Cinema Journal* vol 25 no 3 (1986) pp 5-21
- 31 Herta Herzog 'What do we really know about daytime serial listeners?' in Paul Lazarsfeld and Frank Stanton (eds) *Radio Research 1942-3* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944), pp 3-33, Rudolf Arnheim, 'The world of the daytime serial' *ibid.*, pp 34-85, Helen Kaufman, 'The appeal of specific daytime serials' *ibid.* pp 86-107
- 32 Patrice Petro *Joyless Streets* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) Heide Schlupmann, 'Melodrama and social drama in the early German cinema' *Camera Obscura*, no 22 (1991), pp 73-88

the cinema to which many subsequent scholars of film and television addressed themselves. To work here only with the recent period is also not to imply that there are no female viewers before 1975. Very briefly, using recent historical and theoretical feminist research we can construct two categories of female viewers before this period. There is the general, connotatively feminine category, the consumer of mass culture, whose gendering has recently been discussed by Andreas Huyssen and Patrice Petro.³⁰ This mainly evaluative category – passive victim of media manipulation – has specific manifestations in particular historical bodies of work on film and television. Thus we can distinguish female fans, mainly for the cinema – Kracauer's Little Shop Girls – from, in relation to the broadcast media, research subjects such as the radio-soap listeners investigated by Arnheim, Herzog and Kauffman in the late 1930s and early 1940s.³¹ The second category of female viewer has been produced by post 1975 feminist research into historical cultures of femininity and media consumption, such as Petro's and Schlupmann's work on Weimar cinema,³² Hansen's work on American silent cinema³³ or Lynn Spigel's work on the installation of the television set.³⁴

To return, however, to 1975 and Laura Mulvey. Annette Kuhn uses Mulvey as a starting point in her discussion of feminist work on 'gynocentric' film and television – soap opera, melodrama and the 'woman's picture' – even though Mulvey herself is not particularly concerned with these genres. Kuhn argues that although all feminist critics agree that these gynocentric genres are 'aimed at a female audience', their understanding of what this means can be very different. She articulates the theoretical differences through a series of oppositions:

(textual) spectator	social audience
femininity as a subject	femaleness as a social
position	gender
textual analysis	contextual inquiry
cinematic (or televisual)	historical context of
institution as context	production and reception
sexual difference	sexual difference
constructed through look	constructed through flow,
and spectacle	address and rhythm

Although Kuhn is careful to characterize the ways in which individual writers lay differing emphases on different parts of these binaries, she also points out that there tends to be a patterning in which work which comes through film studies, particularly the engagement with psychoanalysis, tends to move through the categories on the left, whereas work through more institutionally sociological television studies tends to utilize the categories on the

- 33 Miriam Hansen 'Pleasure ambivalence identification Valentino and female spectatorship' *Cinema Journal* vol. 25, no. 4 (1986) pp. 6-32
- 34 Lynn Spigel *Installing the Television Set* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1991)
- 35 Linda Williams, 'Feminist film theory: *Mildred Pierce* and the second world war' in Pribram (ed.) *Female Spectators*, pp. 12-30
- 36 Christine Gledhill 'Pleasurable negotiations' in *ibid.* pp. 64-89
- 37 Annette Kuhn *Cinema Censorship and Sexuality 1909-1925* (London: Routledge 1988)
- 38 *Camera Obscura*, nos. 20-1 (1989)
- 39 Ien Ang and Joke Hermes 'Gender and/in media consumption' in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch (eds) *Mass Communication and Society* (London: Edward Arnold revised edition, 1991) Liesbet van Zoonen, 'Feminist perspectives on the media' in *ibid.*
- 40 Dorothy Hobson, 'Soap operas at work' in Seiter et al. (eds), *Remote Control* pp. 150-67 Ellen Seiter et al. 'Don't treat us like we're so stupid and naive' in *ibid.* pp. 223-47 Ien Ang *Watching Dallas* (London: Methuen 1985), Andrea Press 'Class, gender and the female viewer: women's responses to *Dynasty*' in Mary Ellen Brown (ed.) *Television and Women's Culture* (London: Sage 1990) pp. 158-82 Ann Gray *Video Playtime: the Gendering of a Communication Technology* (London: Routledge forthcoming 1992)

right. The crux of this difference could be characterized as the theoretical site of the 'engendering' of the spectator – is she already a woman when she comes to the text, or is it the text which constructs a feminine position for the viewer? Television scholars have tended to invoke already existing women, film scholars, the textual constitution of spectators. The theoretical problem of the relationship of these two is thus, arguably, displaced through disciplinary boundaries

Since Kuhn wrote this piece, a good deal more feminist scholarship has been published, although some of these binary oppositions remain very much in place, if deployed over different terrain. Thus Linda Williams characterizes a not dissimilar set of oppositions as constitutive of differences between textual and historical feminist film scholars in her discussion of *Mildred Pierce*.³⁵ Christine Gledhill, too, in her discussion of spectatorship, explicitly uses the concept of negotiation to bridge the dualism Kuhn identifies.³⁶ Kuhn herself, in her study of film censorship and sexuality in Britain in the teens and twenties, argues that what she calls the text/context distinction is overcome in her specific historical inquiry.³⁷

There have been several recent surveys of research on the female viewer which have tended, through their disciplinary origins, to be located on one or other side of this divide, but which together give a relatively full picture of recent work. The special issue of *Camera Obscura* on 'The Spectatrix', which offers statements by individual scholars about the female spectator as well as some national surveys and a general introduction, is clearly, as the concern with the female spectator would suggest, formed within film studies.³⁸ On the other hand, recent survey articles by Elizabeth von Zoonen, and Ien Ang and Joke Hermes concentrate on feminist approaches to the mass media and television.³⁹ What I wish to pursue here is the 'television' work, for it is this area of work, along with print media, which has seen the noticeable expansion, in the 1980s, of ethnographic work. Thus while earlier work assumed or hypothesized the responses of female viewers and readers, there is now a distinct body of ethnographic work on the female audience. This work, by Dorothy Hobson, Ien Ang, Andrea Press, the Tübingen project, and Ann Gray has been concerned with the investigation of the media tastes and usages of 'ordinary women'.⁴⁰ It is through a shared concern with ordinary women that Janice Radway's research, although not on television, is so important. *Reading the Romance* is the most extensive scholarly investigation of the act of reading, and of the qualitative criteria and interpretative strategies used by a particular group of women readers. The figure of the ordinary woman is now firmly installed in the classroom. Her likes and dislikes, her

pleasures and fantasies are discussed in seminars and summarized in essays. The problem with this figure, though, is that she can lose the contours of her particularity in the classroom, and join that generalized other to feminism, 'the housewife'. This is both a theoretical and a pedagogic problem, in that without the particularity of the original ethnographic enterprise, gender can be asked to explain both too little and too much. Femininity, instead of being a difficult and contradictory psychic, historical and cultural formation, to which feminists have been historically ambivalent, becomes an explanatory factor. Women like these texts because they (both the texts and the women) have feminine concerns. The categories of gender, constituted as pure as if persons are 'just' gendered, also begin to function in a theoretical short-circuit as explanatory. This can then make it very difficult, in the classroom, to avoid either celebrating or pathologizing the pleasures of these gynocentric texts. Because much feminist media criticism so powerfully installs the figure of the ordinary woman as both the object of study, and, in some ways, the person on whose behalf study is undertaken, and because, as I argue at more length in the final section, the identity 'feminist' has historically been constructed partly in contrast with 'ordinary women', this opposition is always potentially present in the classroom. It can be played out in various ways: students can focus on the way in which they are *not* like the women whose tastes are reported in the literature, *not* like the feminist critics they have to read, or *not* like their teacher. Or they can claim recognition and identification. It is this staking out of the different and overlapping identities and oppositions of woman/feminist in the classroom with which the next section is concerned.

41 Judith Williamson: in one of the few relevant discussions of pedagogy observed in 1981 that teaching in *Screen Education* is like sex – you know other people do it but you never know exactly what they do or how they do it. How does girl number twenty understand ideology? *Screen Education*, no. 40 (1981–2), p. 83. See also Constance Penley, *Teaching in your sleep: feminism and psychoanalysis*, in Cary Nelson (ed.), *Theory in the Classroom* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 129–48, and Valerie Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions* (London: Verso, 1990).

42 See Margo Culley and Catherine Portués (ed.), *Gendered Subjects: The Dynamics of Feminist Teaching* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), bell hooks, *Talking Back* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), chapters 6–11, Paula A. Treichler, *Teaching feminist theory*, in Cary Nelson (ed.), *Theory in the Classroom* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 57–128. Treichler provides an extensive bibliography.

The three Ds: disruption, disappointment and deference

In this section I present some of the difficulties of teaching 'women's genres', drawing on several years of experience, mainly in British and US universities. I draw mainly on my teaching experience not because I consider it exemplary, but out of necessity, in that there has been very little discussion of *pedagogies* of these genres, as opposed to the quite extensive literature on the texts, female spectators and women audiences.⁴¹ Conversations with other feminist teachers in a range of contexts, and material I see as an external examiner, suggest that elements of this experience may be typical, and that other people working in the field face similar problems. I should also make clear that I am not talking about teaching in a 'Women's Studies' context, where the category woman is itself one of the main 'subjects' and where there is a much more extensive debate about, and literature on, pedagogy.⁴²

Disruption seems the most straightforward problem with teaching

'women's genres'. Other teachers have suggested 'derision' and 'dismissal' to describe student responses to some texts and classes. I use the term 'disruption' to designate the disruption of screenings, lectures and classes by some part of the student body on the grounds that the study material is 'stupid', 'ridiculous', and so on. Obviously this type of disruption does not only take place in response to 'women's genres'. Also, in certain contexts, it can be difficult to separate from the routinized sexual harassment of female teachers, the 'what she needs . . .' approach to women authority figures. It is a strategy I have seen deployed, sometimes apparently almost involuntarily, in a range of contexts. It is generally male students who behave in this way, apparently unable to sit quietly, to be complicit with femininity, for even the half hour of a soap opera; but in my experience feminist women can be pretty noisy too, providing 'active oppositional readings' throughout screenings. It is not here my purpose to analyse the range of defences and demals at stake, but minimally to suggest that there is here also a salutary dramatization of social power in play. The study of 'women's genres' may have become more acceptable within the academy; but it has not yet become an acceptable part of hegemonic masculine identity. Nor, in complicated ways which I discuss at more length in the last section, is it compatible with some subcultural feminist identities. Aesthetic and social hierarchies in the wider social context underpin and reinforce these noisy repudiations of girls' things.

The very fact of the disruption can be an excellent starting point for discussion of aesthetic hierarchy, social statuses of audiences, gendered genres and subcultural readings; but it is also important to construct agendas for discussion that are not disruption-led, and to find a place from which 'those whose viewing has been disrupted' can speak. Otherwise work on the disrupted text focuses only on the important – but not all consuming – issue of context/institution, and may be conducted mainly in defensive terms.

These noisy classrooms, however, can also be seen to signal the affect at stake with some of these texts. 'Weepies' are not so known for no reason. Teaching a class in which perhaps a majority were crying when the lights went up is different to, say, looking at the structure of television title sequences.⁴³ Passionate emotional investment in the fate of characters, or the outcome of stories, can be disruptive, in a different sense, of some academic habits. It can also put students in very vulnerable positions – particularly if a class is divided over the value of the study material. This leads me to another danger, in some ways the obverse of students groaning theatrically at a kiss: the problem of a sometimes rather paralysing 'niceness' in seminars on material in which many class members may have a very high personal investment. I have found that, despite taking for granted some things for which older feminists had to fight hard, most young female students still need a great deal of support

⁴³ Franco Moretti recognizes the disruptive effect of tears in academic study when he constructs his corpus of moving literature: 'But why precisely this group of texts and not others? Because – let theory addicts try to stay calm at this point – only these texts have made me cry' (p. 158). Franco Moretti, 'Kindergarten', trans. David Forgacs, in Franco Moretti *Signs Taken for Wonders* (London: Verso 1983) pp. 157–81.

to work confidently in critical and analytical ways. Pedagogically, there seems a fine line between contexts which are supportive and confidence-building, and those in which disagreement is interpreted as disruptive and a problem in itself. The conciliatory element in many cultures of femininity can contribute to a much more congenial atmosphere than the cut and thrust of some academic modes; but it can also leave intellectual differences and disagreements uninterrogated. This tendency is experientially and theoretically complicated if questions of participants' very identity are always conceptually at stake. (This is not to deny that at some level all debate involves the fluctuating constitution and enactment of identities – but to argue that the threat of being found lacking as a woman because you do, or indeed don't, like *Neighbours* does not contribute to either the intellectual or political project of feminism.)

This evocation of the disrupted classroom leads on to a series of relatively speculative points I would like to formulate about the experience of being taught this material. I should say at the outset that I am dwelling on the downside – there are many students for whom the study of this material is both illuminating and rewarding and it is certainly a corpus which I choose to teach.

If they have any choice, students choose to take courses on 'women's genres' for a variety of reasons. Often, of course, students encounter this material as part of a larger course on television or Hollywood cinema. In both cases, though, there is often a discernible excitement among young women at the prospect of studying material which they like, and on which they may be relatively expert. As is often the case in the teaching of popular culture, at least part of the classroom group is composed of individuals who are also fans. Without wishing to labour the point, I should make clear here that I am not suggesting that all young women naturally prefer, for example, romances to football – indeed, it is the increased tendency of media-studies textbooks to assume this with which I am partly concerned; under present cultural arrangements, nevertheless, they very often do, and it is clear that learning about, say, genre through case studies of horror and sci-fi, or television sport through coverage of the World Cup, often involves them in the study of material which they can find at best boring, at worst frightening and upsetting. The bedroom subcultures of femininity tend to give young women the skills of dress, gossip and romance rather than a fan's self-protective sense of the imminence of the next monstrous moment in a horror film.⁴⁴ There is also the issue of the class provenance of clearly feminine media genres, often articulated with the extent to which academic success – being in tertiary education in the first place – has demanded the disavowal and relinquishing of these media skills and pleasures of femininity. This adds further poignancy to the dilemmas of these students. For the excited expectancy of studying – for a change –

44 Angela McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1991)

something they like, of maybe finding grounds for the validation of these tastes, is disappointed by the very structure of the canon. For the canon of femininity is, precisely, a feminist canon. And herein lies both its justification and its crisis. Without feminism, when and where would these works have appeared on the syllabus? But through feminism, and that constitution of feminist identity as other than/opposed to conventional femininities (discussed at more length below) much of the available critical work can only be described, in Angela McRobbie's term, as 'recruitist'.⁴⁵ Hence the disappointment. Because there are homologies between some feminist attitudes and the more general pejorative evaluation of cultures of femininity, too often, given the available reading material – and despite recent embraces of the pleasures of the popular – studying this material, as Judith Williamson observed in 1980, can actually confirm why it is stupid to like it.⁴⁶ Bolstered by its institutional position in the formation of this canon, feminism begins to function as the politically correct form of femininity. And here we come to deference.

The problem of deference is not specific to this field. Students in many disciplines reproduce accounts and discussions of topics not of their choice, within parameters they may feel quite distanced from and bored by. The problem seems acute, though, when there is a very small critical literature, almost all of which inhabits the same paradigms. Take the example of British Gainsborough melodrama. All the substantial discussion of these films is within, or strongly influenced by, feminist paradigms.⁴⁷ It is very difficult for students who write on these films, and who may not have extensive knowledge of postwar Britain or indeed of developments in feminist film criticism, to find other ways of writing about the films. They defer to feminist paradigms, not because they particularly agree but because that is the structure of the field. This again is not unique to this field, and indeed an ability to grasp the parameters and dominant paradigms of a discipline is an essential element in scholarship. The problem is that feminist paradigms, particularly in their more popular manifestations, include quite developed ideas about identity, about what women do and do not enjoy, and what is and is not in their interests. Although this can be challenging and thought-provoking, it can also be very undermining/alienating for female students, who can experience a pressure to defer to (feminist) definitions and accounts of their own identity and experience, or at least of the category – women – to which they think they belong. Again, this can be pedagogically productive, in that, if recognized, it poses all sorts of questions about identity, and particularly about the historical contestations for the category 'woman'. But it should also be recognized that being a good girl, which so many female students want to be, can be profoundly contradictory and stressful for women with feminist teachers.

45 Angela McRobbie, 'The politics of feminist research: between talk, text and action', *Feminist Review*, no. 12 (1982), pp. 46–57.

46 Williamson, 'How does girl number twenty understand ideology?', p. 81.

47 Sue Aspinall and Robert Murphy (eds), *Gainsborough Melodrama*, BFI Dossier no. 18 (London: British Film Institute, 1983). Sue Aspinall, 'Women, realism and reality in British films, 1943–1953', in James Curran and Vincent Porter (eds), *British Cinema History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), pp. 272–93; Raymond Durnat, 'Gainsborough: the times of its time', *Monthly Film Bulletin* vol. 52, no. 619 (1985), pp. 259–61; Jeffrey Richards, 'Gainsborough maniac in the cellar', *MFB* vol. 52, no. 620 (1985), pp. 291–4; Sue Harper, 'Gainsborough: what's in a costume?', *MFB* vol. 52, no. 621 (1985), pp. 324–7; Julian Petley, 'The lost continent', in Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays* (London: British Film Institute, 1986), pp. 98–119; Sue Harper, 'Historical pleasures: Gainsborough costume melodrama', in Gledhill (ed.), *Home is where the Heart is*, pp. 167–96; Robert Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel* (London: Routledge, 1989); Pam Cook, 'Gainsborough Studios', in Annette Kuhn (ed.), *The Woman's Companion to International Film* (London: Virago, 1990), pp. 169–70. The Durnat and Richards articles are most distanced from feminist arguments but arguably would not have been commissioned without them as they form part of the MFB re-reviewing of Gainsborough films in 1985.

Theoretical issues

⁴⁸ Donna Haraway, 'A manifesto for cyborgs: science technology and socialist feminism in the 1980s' *Socialist Review* vol 15 no 80 (1985) pp 65–107, reprinted in Linda J Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1989) p 199 – page reference to this edition

At a theoretical level, three different, but related, problems can be distinguished. The first is formulated by Donna Haraway in her 'Manifesto for cyborgs', when she argues that 'feminisms have simultaneously naturalized and denatured the category "woman" and consciousness of the social lives of "women"'.⁴⁸ She is particularly concerned in this essay to argue for political affiliations rather than a 'natural matrix of unity', and argues against the naturalization of the category 'woman' which subtends some feminist ideas of unity. Although Haraway's essay is primarily directed towards the forging of political alliances, her theoretical point about the tendency towards the naturalization of the categories of gender has relevance to practices of teaching. This theoretical tendency is accelerated in the classroom in the context of any pedagogical strategies – such as the use of everyday incidents as examples, or sentences which begin 'Women ...' or 'Men ...' – which attempt to articulate complex theoretical ideas initially in recognizable forms. This is clearly a controversial issue, and there are those who would argue that teachers who face these problems are in pits of their own excavation. However, this drift towards the naturalization of the categories of gender, for good historical reasons, pervades – indeed constitutes – the terms of the debate, as the titles of recent anthologies illustrate: *The Female Gaze*; *Television and Women's Culture*; *Soap Opera and Women*. It is also within these terms, almost inevitably, that students first attempt to grasp ideas like gendered spectatorship.

The reason for this lies partly in the second theoretical issue, which is the inescapable historical and political imbrication of the category 'woman' in the (feminist) analysis of gender. It is not through theoretical naivete that the category 'woman' haunts the theoretical-intellectual field of gender, but because this field was constituted historically by political mobilization through this identity, and those of homosexuality. Renascent feminism in the late 1960s was a movement for *Women's Liberation*. It is this political movement which has constructed the space which now allows me to raise these academic issues. Michele Barrett and Rosalind Coward offered a 1982 formulation of the issues at stake here in their disagreement with the editorial collective of *m/f* over the status of the categories 'women' and 'men', when they wrote 'We believe that you have mistakenly extended your challenge to the explanatory pretensions of these categories to a denial of their existence as categories at all'.⁴⁹ Denise Riley pushes the argument further in her historical analysis of the category 'woman', arguing that 'an active scepticism about the integrity of the sacred category "women" would be no merely philosophical doubt to be stifled in the name of effective political action in the world. On the contrary, it would be a

⁴⁹ Michele Barrett and Rosalind Coward, 'Letter to the editors of *m/f*', *m/f*, no 7 (1982) p 68

- 50 Denise Riley 'Am I That Name?' *Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Basingstoke Macmillan, 1988) p 113
- 51 Teresa de Lauretis *Alice Doesn't* (London Macmillan, 1984) Julie D'Acci uses this distinction in 'The case of *Cagney and Lacey*' in Helen Baehr and Gillian Dyer (eds), *Boxed In Women and Television* (London Pandora 1987), pp 203–26 So does Judith Mayne in 'LA Law and prime-time feminism', *Discourse*, vol 10, no 2 (1988) pp 30–47
- 52 Teresa de Lauretis *Alice Doesn't* p 4
- 53 Meaghan Morris, introduction to *The Pirate's Fiancée* (London Verso 1988)
- 54 Stuart Hall, 'Minimal selves' in *ICA Documents 6 Identity* pp 44–6 and 'Cultural identity and cinematic representation' *Framework*, no 36 (1989), pp 68–81, 'Coco Fusco: The other is in' *ICA Documents 7 Black Film British Cinema* pp 37–9
- 55 Ellen Carol DuBois and Linda Gordon, 'Seeking ecstasy on the battlefield: danger and pleasure in nineteenth-century feminist sexual thought' in Carole S Vance (ed.) *Pleasure and Danger Exploring Female Sexuality* (London Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984) pp 31–49 Lucy Bland 'Feminist vigilantes of late Victorian England' in Carol Smart (ed.) *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality* (London Routledge 1991)
- 56 Feminist Anthology Collective *No Turning Back Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement 1975–80* (London The Women's Press, 1981) Laurie Bell (ed.), *Good Girls/Bad Girls Sex Trade Workers and Feminists Face to Face* (Toronto The Women's Press, 1987)
- 57 Angela Hamblin 'What can one do with a son? Feminist politics and male children' in Scarlet Friedman and Elizabeth Sarah (eds) *On the Problem of Men* (London The Women's Press 1982) pp 238–44

condition for the latter.' She reaches this conclusion, however, in a context where she has argued for the simultaneous recognition of the historicity of the category 'woman' – 'women' don't exist – and the necessity of maintaining a politics 'as if they existed'. A different inflection of this issue – one taken up more widely in feminist media studies – is the distinction between 'woman' and 'women' proposed by Teresa de Lauretis.⁵¹ In this distinction, 'woman' is an historical discursive construct, while 'women' are the real historical beings who cannot be defined outside discourses of 'woman', but who do nevertheless exist.⁵² The problem, in the classroom, when the object of study is not feminist philosophy but *Coronation Street* or *Now Voyager*, is how to mobilize the necessarily contradictory accounts of the validity of the category 'woman', in conjunction with discussions of audiences which use 'women' as an explanatory category, in a way which is enabling rather than inhibiting for female students.

The third theoretical issue is that of the political agenda and status of 'second wave' feminism itself. The most theoretically chic heritage of 1970s feminism is its contribution, with antiracist/ anticolonialist movements, to the radical decentring of 'white male tradition' Meaghan Morris has argued that this feminist contribution to the postmodern world is consistently ignored by those most empowered by the academic establishment.⁵³ Stuart Hall has testified to the paradoxes of the shifting locations of identity, now that 'the other is in'.⁵⁴ However, this understanding of the theoretical heritage of 1970s and 1980s feminism, with its stress on the historicity and contingency of identifications of the self, obscures a strong countervailing feature of some feminist discourse of that period, its almost eschatological stance in relation to conventional femininities. In this discursive formation, the identity 'feminist' would end sex-objecthood and housewifery for ever. Feminism was the enabling political project through which women's real potential could be liberated: the final femininity. This eschatological project is particularly clear in the feminist/sex-worker clashes of the 1970s and 1980s (themselves partly reminiscent of some of the social purity campaigns in the late nineteenth century⁵⁵) documented in debates over sexuality in collections such as *No Turning Back* and *Good Girls/Bad Girls*,⁵⁶ and the way in which feminists were popularly regarded, and represented, as being 'antihousewife'. That individual feminists had no such understanding of themselves is not at issue; the point is that there are/were features of the feminist identity, and the discourses through which that identity was constituted, which were not compatible with other 'earlier' feminine identities – for example, being a mother of boys, to recall a notoriously divisive issue.⁵⁷ Feminist identity was, in some ways, understood as an identity for women which transcended – and by implication, put an end to – traditional femininity. Laura Kipnis, in her video *A Man's Woman* (1988), investigates the appeal of validations of conventional

⁵⁸ Laura Kipnis, *A Man's Woman*, 1988, produced in association with Channel Four

⁵⁹ Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1983)

⁶⁰ Jacqueline Rose 'Margaret Thatcher and Ruth Ellis', *New Formations* no. 6 (1988) pp. 3–29

⁶¹ Jacqueline Rose 'Femininity and its discontents', in her *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), pp. 82–103

⁶² Janice Winship, 'A girl needs to get street-wise: magazines for the 1980s', *Feminist Review* no. 21 (1985), reprinted in Rosemary Betterton (ed.) *Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media* (London: Pandora, 1987), pp. 127–41

⁶³ Ian Ang, 'Feminist desire and female pleasure', *Camera Obscura*, no. 16 (1988), p. 178–91

femininity in a period when feminist polemic threatened, paradoxically, to enable men, rather than women, to 'have it all'.⁵⁸ Barbara Ehrenreich has traced the historical impact of these feminist discourses on US masculinity.⁵⁹ This work, and that of Jacqueline Rose on Ruth Ellis/Margaret Thatcher, with its reinvestigation of the historical meanings of, and psychical investments in, femininity, works against feminist eschatology while at the same time allowing us to begin to locate it as a significant feminist discourse at a particular historical moment.⁶⁰ It also reminds us that the issue of femininity is not easy, either for feminism or for women.⁶¹ When this element of feminist discourse is traced – and I would argue that it is perhaps more constitutive of second-wave feminism than it is currently comfortable to remember – it becomes clear that terms like postfeminism may, usefully, have a certain precision of historical reference. I would argue that we must at this stage recognize the historical specificity of 1970s/1980s feminism: see it, in its variousness, as just one of the discourses employed in the struggle for dominance over the meanings of femininity. This does not mean abandoning a feminist project, but it does mean jettisoning a certain kind of politically correct feminist identity which constructs other feminine identities as somehow 'invalid'. In the academic context with which I am concerned, this also means examining critically attitudes to 'ordinary women' in feminist media research, while, of course, in the true spirit of women's work, reminding the various dinosaurs in the field that feminist media research does exist.

Helpful reference points here are a 1985 article by Janice Winship, where she offers an analysis of the address and appeal of the new British young women's magazines like *Just Seventeen*, *Etcetera* and *Mizz*,⁶² and Ian Ang's review of Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance*.⁶³ Winship uses an idea of 'marginality' in two senses to describe the concerns of these magazines and their young readership. Firstly, she suggests that this readership finds itself on the edges of the 'overpolished, complacent' address of the more established women's titles. Secondly, she shows how aspects of feminist culture form one of the taken-for-granted aspects of the streetwise culture of these young women. So this readership is constructed as marginal to conventional femininity – but also as having gone beyond, assumed, some of the major concerns of 1970s feminism. In the context of this analysis, Winship argues for a revaluation of 'the stark confrontational style of feminism in the 1970s', arguing that the meanings of images, and indeed, what readers bring to them, has changed over the intervening period. This I understand to be an argument that the historical identity 'feminist' has proved less responsive to change than other feminine identities. I have no evidence apart from conversations with students and sessions with classes; but their experience of institutionally installed

feminist texts is often one of faint perplexity at the evangelical tones in which what seem to them rather old-fashioned ideas are expounded. Andrea Stuart explores a similar sense of distance when she examines the difficulties that 'old' feminism is having with difference, pointing, in contrast, to the appeal of the magazine *Elle*. 'The assumption is that if you're an *Elle* girl you are already improved. Instead of reassuring us that we were all the same, with the same problems, *Elle* stressed difference' ⁶⁴

Ien Ang's review of *Reading the Romance* raises related issues, equally pressing in the classroom.⁶⁵ Ang goes to considerable lengths to recognize the accomplishments of Radway's book, while also pointing to disagreements with elements of its overall project. Radway herself has offered several critical retrospectives on her research, including the generous methodological 'replacing' of the work in terms of British Cultural Studies in the Verso edition.⁶⁶ I want to use Ang's review, not as part of an attack on Radway, but because it offers some formulations with which to pursue difficult disagreements in what I would hope could still be understood as a shared feminist project. It is issues of identity which I wish to pursue. Ang argues that, beyond a certain point in the research, the identities of the participants are fixed:

These are the theoretical terms in which Radway conceives the troubled relationship between feminism and romance reading. A common ground – the perceived sharing of the experiential pains and costs of patriarchy – is analytically secured, but from a point of view that assumes the mutual exteriority of the two positions. The distribution of identities is clearcut: Radway, the researcher, is a feminist and *not* a romance fan, the Smithtown women, the researched, are romance readers and *not* feminists. From such a perspective, the political aim of the project becomes envisaged as one of bridging this profound separation between 'us' and 'them' ⁶⁷

From this, Ang goes on to argue that, for Radway, doing feminist research is a matter of pedagogy: 'its aim is directed at raising the consciousness of romance reading women' ⁶⁸ Ang argues against this position as involving a vanguardist idea of the relationship between 'feminism' and 'women', and continues that this political predicament is the result of a failure to theorize fantasy or pleasure in terms other than those of ideological function for nonfeminist women. She concludes by arguing for a different starting point for the feminist researcher, one which attempts to overcome the opposition between feminism and romance-reading through recognition of a shared investment in fantasy, and therefore allows change in 'the sense of identity that is constructed by feminism itself' ⁶⁹

Ang's delineation of 'feminist desire' in this review essay seems

⁶⁴ Andrea Stuart, 'Feminism dead or alive?' in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p. 31

⁶⁵ Ang, 'Feminist desire and female pleasure'

⁶⁶ Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance* in her *Reading the Romance* (London: Verso, 1987) pp. 1–18. 'Reception study: ethnography and the problems of dispersed audiences and nomadic subjects' *Cultural Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1988) pp. 359–76

⁶⁷ Ang, 'Feminist desire and female pleasure' pp. 183–4

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 184

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 189

70 Kobena Mercer 'Welcome to the jungle' in Rutherford (ed.) *Identity* pp. 43-71

relevant to the teaching of the genres with which I have been concerned; indeed feminist desire pervades the literature. This desire is to transform 'ordinary women' into feminists. I have argued that these identities have been more interdependent historically than is often recognized, and that a feminist project can only gain from a rather more provisional, attentive, even ironic, sense of self – and other. In the classroom, I think this means increasing attention to the historical construction of the personae and positions of feminist criticism – the 'female spectator', 'reading as a woman', 'women of color', 'we', 'the ordinary woman' – as, precisely, *historical* identities, the contradictory sites and traces of political arguments and exclusions. Seeing these identities and positions historically makes it more difficult to sustain a recruitist pedagogy, and can perhaps facilitate discussion of what Kobena Mercer has called the 'sheer difficulty of living with difference' 70

Many students have helped me to think about these ideas. I should like to thank those on my Melodrama and Soap Opera course at Duke University (1987), Special Topic: Femininity and Genre at Warwick University (1989-90) and CAB13 Feminism, Film and Television at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1991) particularly the Madison students from Women's Studies.

Does media education exist in the USSR?

ALEXANDER SHARIKOV

The term 'media education' (more precisely, use of the English term 'media education' rather than its Russian equivalent) first appeared in Soviet publications in approximately 1975. The first person who appears to have used it was Victor Stelmah – one of the Soviet experts at UNESCO of that period – who was at the time actively collaborating with media educationists from other countries in a range of media-studies initiatives beyond the borders of the Soviet Union itself. Being also influenced by new international pedagogic movements, Stelmah tried to combine such ideas with media education, and to introduce media studies into the Soviet Union. But his attempts were not successful, and for some years, nobody in the USSR spoke about 'media education' at all. The reasons for this failure, and the situation which has subsequently emerged from it, provide the focus of this article.

Media and media education

Sometimes the view is expressed by westerners that lack of interest in media education in the Soviet Union is linked to a generally low level of media development in the USSR. But this point of view is incorrect. Media have in fact played a very important part in the development of the Soviet state. In the early 1920s, for instance, the leaders of the Soviet government, especially Lenin, attached great importance to the role of media within their propagandist aim of spreading communist ideas throughout Russia and the world. In the

Soviet Union, broadcasting began in 1924; and the first television transmission took place in 1931. After World War II, Moscow Television Centre was the first in Europe to start broadcasting again. It is also important to bear in mind, in this context, a range of other factors, besides the celebrated history of Soviet cinema: the enormous circulation of Soviet periodicals; the setting-up of one of the first satellite television systems; and the eminence (according to data gathered in UNESCO research) of Soviet radio, as regards transmissions to foreign countries. On these grounds alone, the hypothesis that lack of interest in media education in the Soviet Union is the result of underdevelopment in terms of media themselves is implausible.

My own view is that the relative lack of interest in, and underdevelopment of, media education in the Soviet Union is the result of another and different pressure: Soviet authoritarianism of the 1960s and 1970s, when all media were under very rigid control by the state. But this explanation can take on for outsiders a form as simplistic as that of the 'low level of media development' hypothesis, so it is important to note that, as an explanation, the view involves some paradoxes.

Firstly, the important and evident propagandist orientation of all information transmitted by the Soviet media during the 1960s and 1970s involved sometimes discrepant impulses and priorities. For instance, some unnamed 'worker' vilifies books by Solzhenitsyn in a newspaper. But practically everyone understands that this is nothing more than a contrived display for the sake of propaganda, since the opposite of this situation is in fact the case: it is impossible to read the books at all, because no editions of them are available. The alternative to consuming ready-made official opinion, therefore, is not alternative opinion but silence; if someone reads a book in an 'underground' publication, then he or she cannot disclose that fact in the media, because this kind of reading is punishable and the speaker would risk imprisonment. What makes this set of circumstances important is its contribution to the development of public attitudes: the curious thing is that the majority of the population comprehend the contradictions involved in the Soviet media, and so for a broadcaster actually to achieve a required propagandist effect, a great deal of sophistication and subtlety would be needed. Two contrary observations follow from this. On the one hand, it is not difficult to understand why the idea of introducing media education as part of a programme of 'education for democracy' was not widespread, the authorities would simply not permit any such initiative. On the other hand, formal media education as a way of reducing the scale of manipulation of public opinion was clearly unnecessary, because the prevailing situation ensured that informal media education took place practically, in each family, as people reflected on and discussed the media situation.

around them: as a result it was not at all easy to manipulate public opinion in the first place.

The second strange consequence of Soviet authoritarianism, as regards media education, was that, with rigid control, censorship removed many of the typical concerns which have prompted media education in many other parts of the world. Concerns such as 'violence in the media', 'sex on screen' or the 'negative effects of advertising' were hardly pressing within the overall agenda or systems of control of broadcasting. Soviet television was extremely sterile during that period; and so it did not call into being the kinds of issue which perplex broadcasting in the West. The 'defensive' (or morally regulative) policy-function of media education, as it has developed in many countries, was scarcely required during the Brezhnev period. And so Victor Stelmah's appeal was hardly understood – not only among teachers and parents, but even among researchers.

Beginnings of change

In the early 1980s (and especially from 1982, when Yury Andropov, a former chief of the KGB, became effectively the head of the USSR), people began to speak about the need for 'contrapropagandist work' with the population. This thesis was especially emphasized at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party which took place in June 1983. The period during which the Plenum took place, of course, was that of the Afghanistan War, in which a 'limited contingent' of the Soviet Army had been taken into Afghanistan to 'defend the Afghan Revolution'. The political dimension forms a necessary context in which to understand what took place as regards media education as a result of the 1983 Plenum. During the war – the greatest error of Brezhnev's foreign policy – the USSR was almost completely isolated internationally, and was sharply attacked by foreign media. After a series of attempts to suppress 'voices of foreign propaganda' by technical means – and after some repressive actions against those who listened to these 'voices' – the Soviet administration decided instead to actively develop people's critical thinking by means of a 'contrapropagandist' campaign. Again, the result was a paradoxical situation: the development of critical thinking (which is central to justifications of media education put forward in western countries) was taken over, to some extent, as a major aim of the Soviet propaganda-machine itself. The aim of regulating undesired external media influence stimulated the first Soviet moves towards preparing internal public opinion for media education.

Some important details and qualifications are nevertheless needed at this point. First of all, it is important to recognize that some

forms of media education had existed in the USSR from the immediate post-revolution period. In 1919, the Soviet authorities organized Journalism Courses in Russia, which sought to train professional journalists, in order to promote the development of Soviet periodicals; and later, during the 1950s, the first Faculties of Journalism began to appear in Soviet universities. In 1919, the Moscow Cine-School had also been created, the first film education institution in the world to train professional cinematographers; and in 1930, this school was transformed into the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography. Other similar examples support the general view that professional training in media, in the USSR, has had a long history. So if we are to talk about the development of media education specifically during the 1970s and 1980s, we need to distinguish between training and critical development, and to consider less the training centres themselves than general public education, at secondary and sometimes primary level.

Media education always exists within a more general education system; and during the Brezhnev period the Soviet education system can be described as having been very rigid. All school subjects were strongly controlled; and it was impossible to introduce into school, without special permission, not only any new subject but even a new segment or unit within an existing school curriculum. It was also extremely difficult to modify anything within the prescribed structure. But many kinds of activity did nevertheless exist. There were many kinds of provision for children and young people, including different types of youth clubs, centres, studios and recreation circles, and among these, the most popular were the cinema clubs, providing an elementary technical film education. Since at such clubs young people made their own films, the clubs spawned circles of young journalists, photographers, and radio and television enthusiasts, within a general pattern of informal work.

There is only one kind of educational initiative that can be considered an exception to this pattern of informal education: the film-education course 'Art of Cinema', taken as an optional subject in some schools. This course reflected the high level of development in film education in the country, both in theoretical and technical aspects; and there have been, for instance, about thirty Candidate theses (a level between Master's and Doctoral) defended since 1966, as well as one Doctoral thesis (by Yuri Ussov). Growing out of work related to this type of film education, there are now several major research groups working in this direction, in Moscow, Tallinn, Leningrad, Minsk, Kiev, Kurgan and other cities.

Towards more general media education

The remarks above relate to film education, which should be seen as a specialized area within media education, with its own specific

definitions and boundaries. There remained no school subject concerned with the general media environment in the USSR. But steps have now also been taken in this direction.

The first innovations along these lines were made during the early 1980s, by a group of researchers in Estonia, including K. Leht, H. Sein, I. Trikkel and others, who prepared a section about media in a course for thirteen to fifteen year-old Estonian students. There are a number of reasons why this initiative happened in the Republic of Estonia rather than anywhere else. Firstly, Estonia is very close to Finland: both Estonian and Finnish are in the same language group, and so Estonians can understand Finnish quite well; as a result, in most families people can watch Finnish programmes, and this resulted in the Soviet authorities being content to legitimize media education in Estonia as part of 'contrapropagandist' activity. Secondly, in Finland itself there are strong traditions of media education (for example, work by S. Minkkinen and K. Nordenstreng); and this Finnish experience provided an important stimulus for, and influence on, the Estonian researchers. Thirdly, within Finnish media education the tradition is strongly established of seeking to defend Finnish national culture from the 'informational imperialism' of the USA and other highly developed countries. With an evident irony, the Estonians appear to have introduced elements into their own programme for media education of defending their own culture, both from foreign (that is US) and from Soviet 'informational imperialism'. But the concern with the influence of Soviet media was not declared as a reason, rather, the appearance was created of simply having accepted arguments made by the Soviet authorities regarding the need for 'contrapropagandist' initiatives. While there may be a speculative dimension to my suggestions of intent and submerged politics in these media studies initiatives, it remains an indisputable historical fact – in need of explanation of some sort – that the first compulsory, intracurricular media education initiatives in the Soviet Union took place in Estonia and nowhere else.

Media education and perestroika

Despite the Estonian initiative, by the middle of the 1980s media education had come to require new organizational and pedagogic forms; and this need brought into being the Laboratory of Film and TV Education within the Institute of Aesthetic Education of the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, Moscow. After some years of experimental work under the leadership of Yuri Ussov and others, researchers at the Institute have created a course called 'Audiovisual Culture', a course now beginning to be introduced throughout the country.

As regards media education, however, the biggest developments in social consciousness have occurred less because of specific curriculum initiatives than as a result, during the last five years, of perestroika. The movement of glasnost, and the aspiration towards more substantive forms of democracy, have served to prepare ground for understanding the need to introduce elements of media education into Soviet secondary schools. Soviet schools are now freer, in any case, as regards the curriculum choices they can make; now they can select different syllabus models, involving different combinations of school subjects, and in some schools, teachers create their own, independent media-education curricula. Typically this still amounts either to a film-education course or a journalism course; but, irrespective of the detail of course content, the new situation has demanded – and is responded to with – new levels of conceptualization and planning.

In these circumstances, Soviet educators have begun to develop the first forms of a specifically Soviet, 'academic' media-education project, at the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. This project is aimed at preparing a specialized media-education curriculum for the secondary school level, taking the form of a compulsory subject within the humanities.

Summarizing existing work and directions, therefore, it is now possible to return to the general question 'Is there media education in the USSR?' In the following specific senses, at least, there is. Firstly, there is a long history of professional training, dating from 1919. Secondly, there have been two traditions of media-education work, in terms of more general public education: extra-class activity, from the 1920s, in journalism and film education, especially informally among circles of young people; intracurricular activity, including sections in courses about media in courses of mother-tongue instruction from the early 1980s, and some other, optional elements ('Art of Cinema' from the 1960s, 'Audiovisual Culture' and 'Journalism' from the mid 1980s).

What is clear in this history – certainly by comparison with the rather different development of media education in western countries – is that, although media education does exist, it has remained until very recently at the periphery of school educators' interests. But we have started.

Media, media education and the development of South Africa

P. ERIC LOUW

In the Information Age, media and communication policy is potentially pivotal in hegemony building and development in a post-apartheid South Africa. The kind of communication system that develops during the initial reconstructive phase will have a profound impact on the nature of the emergent social order.

South Africa needs to be fully integrated into the global electronic grid of information. But what is to be avoided is integration into the network as a 'Third (South) World' multinational capitalist dependency where South Africans would be incorporated merely as passive uncritical 'takers' from a neocolonial system. This is important in order that South Africans have the opportunity to be critical users of such a global system, and to be a media-trained population capable of being active contributors to such a system. Further, a serious challenge will be to demonstrate that being a part of the Information Age does not necessarily mean accepting the top-down and alienating relations of production associated with multinational capitalism (MNC). A left-democratic alternative mode of Information-Age social organization can be built. Jurgen Habermas calls this a 'radical democratic process for the formation of public opinion'.¹ For Habermas, the process of democratic communication should be more important to the Left than the actual content of the communication; he recognizes that democratic communication is the key means to 'redistribute power'. In the South African context specifically, 'participation', 'development' and 'media/communication' need to be worked into a single programme for building a post-apartheid society with democratic (and more

1 Jurgen Habermas 'What does socialism mean today? The Rectifying Revolution and the need for new thinking on the left' *New Left Review* no 183 (1990) p 19

equally distributed) power relationships. The South African Left, because of its ascendancy in the 1990s, may be granted the historical opportunity to demonstrate that a practical leftist alternative does exist to both MNC and Marxist-Leninist vanguardism.

The challenge is not merely that of benefiting from the latest sociotechnological developments derivative of the Information Age, but also potentially enhancing democracy in South Africa by creatively using the latest media technology. The challenge is to grasp the opportunities offered by the flux of the post-apartheid reconstruction of society to demonstrate that a left-popular democracy can be built by coopting the media technologies developed by MNC.

The ascendancy of the South African Left in the 1980s intercepted a specific form of MNC. The danger, however, exists that this Left might lose the struggle for meaning (to the Right and MNC) because of its 'marginalization' of the importance of the superstructures as sites of engagement. Media and media policy are simply not priorities on the contemporary leftist agenda. The Rhodes University Media Policy Workshop held in September 1990² did help in raising some key media-policy issues, despite mutterings about a lack of 'consultation';³ but these have not been systematically pursued since then.

The idea of convening a 'national media summit' – to develop left media policy – was first raised in 1989, but died shortly thereafter. This failure occurred primarily because of the limitations of popular-democratic organization in the context of the 1990s. The 1980s popularist phase of struggle had built a political culture on the principle of 'consultation with the masses'.⁴ However, following the legalization of organizations like the African National Congress and South African Communist Party, this culture has shown itself to be of limited value to praxis. Continually waiting for 'mandates' from 'the masses', and/or waiting for 'mandated people' to act, has paralysed leftist action. In his closing address to the ANC's national consultative conference in December 1990, Nelson Mandela explained the impossibility for leadership to 'consult' grassroots over every decision.⁵ To compound the problem, very few leftists are interested in 'media/communication policy'. To await the successful outcome of mass consultation on this issue might mean that no media/communication policy ever emerges.

Further, it should be recognized that 'consultation' itself is not always 'democratic'. The call for 'consultation' can be used by skilful populists and vanguardists for their own political ends. It can easily lend itself to a Khmer Rouge-type (anarchist) logic and hence become antiorganizational and paralyse all action by 'blocking' instead of 'facilitating' creative developments. 'Consultation' is different from 'participation'. The former too easily lends itself to populist cooption (a real danger from a future reformed Right if it

2 See 'The media policy debate: And should it be taking place?' *Rhodes Journalism Review* vol 1 no 1 (1990), pp 33–58.

3 D Niddrie 'Waiting for movement' *Work in Progress* nos 70–1 (1990).

4 See P. Eric Louw 'Rejoinder to "Opposing apartheid": building a South African democracy through an alliance which includes Leninists', *Theoria*, vol 73 (1989) pp 49–62.

5 Nelson Mandela, 'In defence of leadership', *New Nation* (12 December 1990), p 5.

wins some comprador allies). Conversely, participative structures (public spheres) – based on people becoming involved at the grassroots level (with matters that interest them) – is less likely to lead to a populist anarchism or to be coopted by skilful populist leaders. This is where a democratic communication infrastructure is a corrective. A national ‘public sphere’ could institutionalize a (‘direct’) ‘participative’ political culture, and hence remove the necessity for ‘consultation’ based on (two-step) ‘representative’ logic

As with the history of revolution in other societies, the South African Left is similarly demonstrating inertia in incorporating communication, media and information technology into a reconstruction of historical materialism. A communication policy, or at least general guidelines for such a policy, are prerequisites for such reconstitution. The empowerment of all citizens through the creation of public spheres at local levels is one way of ensuring that an active/participatory political culture permeates throughout society. Such a communication infrastructure would also create a mechanism for the ongoing articulation of grassroots ‘feeling’. Active public spheres could serve as brakes on the development of a national *nomenklatura* and/or oligarchy. But this potentiality requires that the Left breaks free of the limitations of orthodox historical materialism, and directly engages sites of communication and the superstructures.⁶ A ‘reconstruction of historical materialism’ is called for.⁷ A tradition of such ‘reconstructive’ work, challenging economistic Marxism (while seeking to recapture the early Marx’s concern for the ‘subjective’) can be traced back to the 1920s in the form of Lukacs, Korsch, the Frankfurt School, Volosinov and Gramsci. This work challenged the reductive base–superstructure notion⁸ – a notion which coincidentally served the interests of Marxist–Leninist politicians and their attendant *nomenklatura* by downplaying ‘active subjectivity’. More recently Williams, the Birmingham School, Habermas and Mattelart have further developed this ‘superstructural’ theme within Marxism. Enzensberger, however, argues that the Left needs to give this superstructural theme a more explicitly ‘praxis’ orientation.⁹

Rethinking ‘development’

A left-democratic public sphere requires, firstly, an infrastructure that facilitates active grassroots participation – that is, constitutionally guaranteed ‘access’ to local and national communication processes. However, such access needs to be more than a legal ‘paper’ right, it should be underpinned by guaranteed access to resources. The latter could be facilitated by a state media subsidy system.¹⁰ A nationwide network of Media Resource Centres

6 See Habermas ‘What does socialism mean today?’

7 Jürgen Habermas *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (London: Heinemann, 1979)

8 Raymond Williams *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 75–6

9 Hans M. Enzensberger *The Consciousness Industry* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 95–128

10 P. Eric Louw ‘Restructuring the South African media – can one combine socialist and libertarian principles?’ *Rhodes Journalism Review* vol. 1 no. 1 (1990), pp. 34–7

(MRCs) would be one useful form. Creating MRCs need not entail building new infrastructures, and/or a massive resource outlay. Every school, college and university in the country already has some of the infrastructure required by an MRC. MRC development could occur through a rearrangement of existing resources around such educational nodes. There already exists a massive countrywide network of churches, mosques, temples, synagogues, and so on which could also provide a significant rudimentary shell for MRC construction. Secondly, the creation of a fully functioning 'public sphere' would be impossible without a 'media literate' population, intellectually equipped to use all the potential available in contemporary, and still to be developed, information technologies. So, for example, the (neo-Luddite) notion that some technologies are only appropriate for the 'First (North) World' can only serve to retard social progress in contexts like South Africa.¹¹

11 See *Media Development* special issue, *Electronic Networking in the Third World* vol XXXIV no 4 (1987), pp 2-28, for example on the possibilities that 'electronic networking' has for assisting development in the South/Third World

The argument that South Africa is a 'developing society', without the necessary funds to allocate to such a scheme in post-apartheid media, is often heard. Sections of left-liberal opinion argue that funding of basic housing is more important than media during post-apartheid reconstruction. Housing is important, but so too is democracy. A participative media infrastructure (and the training to use it) represents, in the long run, a greater guarantee of housing for all by empowering people with democratic communications, all would have access to make their demands heard on an ongoing basis (for housing, jobs, schools, and so on). The key to democratic development is to give people the means to decide for themselves what they want, and the channels to articulate their wants. Another argument against media development is that the masses are not 'ready' for such 'First-World' infrastructures. This sort of logic applauds the rural-peasant-based 'African Model' of development.¹² This is a strangely 'patronizing' and 'colonial' mind set. It implies that Africans are not ready for so-called 'First-World' technology and that Africa needs 'appropriate technology'.¹³ 'Appropriate' means 'less sophisticated' which, in a sense, implies keeping Africa 'backward'. It is unlikely that South Africans would opt for the 'backward looking' route if given the choice. South Africa has the resources to integrate virtually all its citizens into an urban-based information society within a reasonable time-frame, if the will exists to do so. But this requires a significant rearrangement of existing resources via a 'development scheme' to create the infrastructures and provide the necessary training. The 'appropriate technology' view offers a short-sighted interpretation of 'development', and a condemnation of South Africa to the status of a 'Third (South) World' society disconnected from the global information economy. The suggestions outlined in this article, it should be stressed, need not mean massive additional outlays. Rather, they involve a creative 'arrangement' of available 'development' funding. Infrastructures

12 See Michael Barratt-Brown *Models in Political Economy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1990) chapter 14

13 See Austin Robinson (ed.) *Appropriate Technologies for Third World Development* (London: MacMillan 1979)

and training required for democratic communication would become part of overall reconstruction plans.

The challenge is to use the possibilities and spaces of the Information Age to construct a left democracy. The Cape's 'Grassroots' community media project, in particular, demonstrated, on a micro scale, that the concepts of a 'public sphere'¹⁴ and 'popular communication'¹⁵ are not merely utopian.¹⁶ If the Left wins the first election, it will have the opportunity to demonstrate this on a much larger scale. But to succeed, the Left will need to develop answers to the problems of social organization and social struggle in an era during which the superstructures are so dominant. The 'top-down' MNC relations of production and communication do not have to form the basis of either media or social organization in an information society. The Left must creatively use the democratic possibilities inherent in the Information Age to overcome the legacy of 'socialism-without-democracy' in Eastern Europe.

- ¹⁴ Jurgen Habermas 'The public sphere' *New German Critique* vol 1, no 3 (1974), pp 49-55
- ¹⁵ Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub (eds), *Communication and Class Struggle Vol 2 Liberation, Socialism* (New York: International General, 1983)
- ¹⁶ See also the Philippines experience as described by Eleanor R Dionisio 'Small media big victory', *Media Development* vol XXXIII, no 4 (1986) pp 6-8

Towards a new leftist theorization of popular media/communication

During the 1980s, the 'alternative' media were influenced by both 'popular' and socialist-democratic principles, some from external sources, and some of local origin. Lanigan and Strobl's summary¹⁷ of 'marxist' approaches to media offers points of departure for conceptualizing a South African popular media/communication strategy:

- ¹⁷ R. L. Lanigan and R. L. Strobl 'A critical approach' in Dan D. Nimmo and Keith R. Saunders *Handbook of Political Communication* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981), pp 146-7

- 1) Changing the content of mass media to eliminate consumerism which has permeated deeply into the consciousness of employees and wage earners. This notion also exists in the work of Habermas, the Frankfurt School and Armand Mattelart.
- 2) Dismantling the capitalist system and thereby the existing structures of mass communication, and the subsequent creation of a political 'proletarian publicity'. This notion underpinned Hans Enzensberger's view of transforming media manipulation from a 'minority' to a 'majority' phenomenon.¹⁸ He, in this respect like Raymond Williams, recognizes that subaltern groups are not a passive mass, but are active, creative beings, who therefore need 'spaces' for cultural expression.
- 3) Creating worker participation in media production (editorial, technical, administrative), and liberating the workers from subjugation and dependence on the providers of capital. This notion can be found in all leftist writing on media work. Underlying this idea is a concern for ending the alienation caused by production-line methods. This is especially well articulated in Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* and Lukacs's *History and Class Consciousness*.
- 4) Transferring media control from private owners to producers;

- ¹⁸ Enzensberger *The Consciousness Industry*

expropriating privately-run media businesses, decentralizing and demonopolizing media firms and transforming them into socialized institutions (open to participation) This goal is concerned with a process of de-alienating media work, and removing top-down minority control.

5) Forming advertisement and publicity cooperatives to distribute advertisements to all affiliated media on an equal basis, thereby preventing concentration of communication power This goal ties into both a Mattelart and Frankfurt School-type opposition to the capitalist-organized culture industry

6) Politically activating the masses for communicative emancipation and developing 'communicative competence' – that is, action oriented toward reaching 'understanding' in the spontaneous creation of media programmes by involving the public in the articulation of their perceived societal needs and interests. Besides being a central notion in Habermas's work, this goal also links into the culturalist notion of activating popular participation in cultural production

Leftist debates on democratizing South African media fall into three subcategories. Firstly, theoretical identification of participatory media structures, and how to create such structures These complement leftist ideals and societal structures (Lanigan and Strobl's categories 1 and 2) Secondly, the encouragement of society-wide *democratic practices* and the media's role in them How to generate democratic practices and dialogue that penetrate into every sector of society, through to the grassroots, and to what extent democratic practices will be *assisted* by a democratic media structure, are prime questions (Lanigan and Strobl's categories 3 to 6) Thirdly, how to prevent the emergence of a new (minority) ruling group accumulating power and wealth at the expense of the majority Two possible South African distortions of leftist practice in this regard would be a *nomenklatura* system, or a cooption of sectors of the Left into comprador arrangements with MNC

Various projects have attempted to institutionalize the above notions into a left-democratic media practice. Examples are Chile,¹⁹ Nicaragua;²⁰ Mocambique;²¹ community media projects in Britain;²² resource-centre projects in South Africa,²³ and the South African progressive alternative media ²⁴ The last of these attempted to prevent the granting of a privileged position to media activists/workers; and to prevent unidirectional (top-down) communication which would turn the masses into mere passive recipients of media messages As Mattelart states

The left, even if it goes along with the rules of the market, cannot allow its publications to remain passive objects. A new culture cannot be imposed A new culture is created by the various

- 19 See Mattelart, 'Continuity and discontinuity in communications points for a polemic' in Mattelart and Siegelau, *Communication and Class Struggle* p 362
- 20 Armand Mattelart *Communicating in Popular Nicaragua* (New York: International General 1986) and Robert White 'Participatory radio in Sandanista Nicaragua' *Media Development* vol XXXVII, no 1 (1990)
- 21 Leite de Vasconcelos, 'Mobilizing the media: the experience of Mocambique' in *Open Media in a New South Africa* (Cape Town: Institute for a Democratic Alternative 1990) Occasional Paper, no 35 pp 20–1
- 22 Heinz Nigg and Graham Wade *Community Media* (Zurich: Regenbogen Verlag 1980)
- 23 Jenni Karlsson, 'Resource centre offers alternative information and media services', *Group Media Journal*, vol VIII, no 1 (1989), pp 18–21 and Costas Criticos 'Group media: a creative response to censorship' *Group Media Journal*, vol VIII, no 1 (1989), pp 22–4
- 24 Keyan G Tomaselli and P Eric Louw (eds), *The Alternative Press in South Africa* (Bellville/London: Anthropos/James Currey, 1991)

revolutionary sectors; they create it by participating organisationally in its creation ²⁵

'Participation' is the key word in organizing popular media ²⁶ Christians has argued the need to move away from the 'negative freedom' of the Enlightenment and towards the positive freedom of a participative culture.²⁷ He draws on both Robert White and Paulo Freire²⁸ to develop the notion of communication as 'open spaces'. 'Spaces' are 'public spheres' within which positive freedom can be exercised. This notion is the very antithesis of the 'culture industry' (and the 'Enlightenment culture') described by Adorno and Horkheimer²⁹ and Marcuse.³⁰ Such participative media offer a vehicle for counteracting the social anomie and alienation associated with being 'controlled' rather than being 'in control'. Such media also open up spaces for the full articulation and growth of popular culture

Journalists as 'facilitators' of social communication replace the idea of journalists as 'originators' of media messages.³¹ The media should rather be operated as a mechanism to facilitate social dialogue/democracy and an ongoing learning process. This is especially important in South Africa where decades of neofascist rule stunted the development of an indigenous 'democratic culture' (amongst both the ruling classes and most of the ruled). A mechanism for institutionalizing dialogue is required so that an active grassroots political culture can directly impact on national policy. (The latter is a reasonable guarantee against the possible rise of a coopted comprador class, and/or *nomenklatura* oligarchy.) Mattelart argues in this regard that the media should be seen as:

mechanisms allowing the workers to develop their level of awareness, and hence their ability to assess and give opinions about published products and thereby to avoid the risk of manipulation by those with longer experience ³²

Ideally, such participation should be implemented during the transition (negotiation) phase leading to democratic rule in South Africa. In reality, it seems unlikely that this will be possible because the other (rightist) parties to the negotiations will block such developments. Until the Left comes to power no funds will be allocated to the creation of the sort of communication infrastructure needed. Another impediment is the 'top-down' rhetorical posturing that is characteristic of transition periods. In addition, the ANC lacks sufficient resources even to develop an effective internal dialogical structure (able to make its own constituency effectively part of real decision-making) during this transition phase.

²⁵ Mattelart. Continuity and discontinuity in communications p. 362

²⁶ See Mattelart and Siegelau *Communication and Class Struggle*, and Robert White. *Communication popular language of liberation. Media Development* vol XXVII, no. 3 (1980) pp. 3-9

²⁷ Clifford Christians. *Communication ethics from collective responsibility to collective action. Media Development* vol XXXIV no. 3 (1987), pp. 21-2

²⁸ Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth Penguin, 1972)

²⁹ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London Verso 1979)

³⁰ Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968)

³¹ See Giuseppe Richeri, 'Local radio and television stations in Italy', in Mattelart and Siegelau, *Communication and Class Struggle* pp. 406-7

³² Armand Mattelart. Continuity and discontinuity in communications p. 364

Towards a new leftist approach to teaching media

In examining all aspects of cultural production and consumption, including media and the teaching of media, two fundamental (and interrelated) questions are: who benefits? who loses? At heart, these are questions of power and context, and questions of how power affects cultural meanings and practices.³³

If the objective is to empower all citizens through public spheres, then 'critical' and 'aware' media producers and users are required. For Habermas, this gets to the heart of the leftist project in the contemporary world: to use the public sphere to 'generate ferment', and 'work for a redistribution of power'.³⁴ A prerequisite for functioning popular communication is a citizenry that is fully equipped to make use of the 'democratic spaces' provided by information technology. Both media producers and users need to be taught to be continually aware of the power relationships underpinning media messages (and media technology).³⁵ In this way they will learn to understand the social implications of how they, and others, are relating to the media. Journalists, for example, should be taught to go beyond merely knowing how to produce a news story. They also need to consider who benefits and who loses through their use of a particular style of news gathering. Why have they been taught to do their job in a particular way? Why are newsrooms and the wider media-institutions configured in the way they are? Why is certain media technology developed (and by whom), while other areas of research and development are left fallow?

Similarly, media users should be made aware and more questioning of existing (and possible) patterns of media ownership, news selection, television programming, and so on. Both producers and users should be educated to understand how existing media relations (including the influence of both state intervention and market forces) may be manipulating them, and may be curtailing the possibilities inherent in communication technology. Media can improve democracy through facilitating more social interaction and by making information, entertainment and a participative political culture more readily available for all. If Habermas is correct, once people know the possibilities they will demand access to this potential. Skewed power relationships will not be tolerated once people know they are skewed.³⁶

All this requires 'teaching the media' in a particular way: an understanding of context needs to be incorporated into all media training and media education. Linked to this is the notion of social struggle.³⁷ Media literacy alerts people to the nature of struggles occurring; the way those involved in the struggles manipulate and/or are manipulated by the media; and how certain players in the struggle have advantages afforded them by their direct ownership of,

³³ See Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Peter Braham, *Media, Knowledge and Power* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), and David Punter (ed.) *Introduction to Contemporary Cultural Studies* (London: Longman, 1986).

³⁴ Habermas, 'What does socialism mean today?' pp. 19-21.

³⁵ See, for example, Keyan G. Tomaselli and Jeanne Prinsloo, 'Video realism and class struggle: theoretical lacunae and the problem of power', *Continuum* vol. 3, no. 2 (1990) pp. 140-59.

³⁶ Habermas, 'What does socialism mean today?' p. 19.

³⁷ Keyan G. Tomaselli, *A Contested Terrain: Struggle through Culture* (Inaugural Lecture, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1986).

or behind-the-scenes influence over, media institutions. A public with such knowledge (of media, context and struggle) would become critical 'readers' of media. A successful media-education programme would make the very notion of 'user' and/or 'consumer' of media somewhat redundant because a media-literate public would be less dependent and/or more akin to active coproducers of media messages.

Teaching all future (and present) media producers and users about the relationship between power and ideas would make for a more 'rational' use of media. Both would benefit from media-instruction that contextualizes media in these terms. The effect should be to help human beings regain control of the media (and the social communication process), and overcome the 'culture industry'. This would, in effect 'rehumanize'³⁸ the media, by potentially creating a social dialogue, or public sphere. But an important prerequisite is for people to learn about the media in their contextual setting. This knowledge will enable people to become active comanipulators of media variables and thereby become cocreators of culture and hegemony. This notion amounts to turning the Frankfurt School on its head: the School's members were (rightly) concerned at the way in which the 'culture industry' was able to coopt even the most oppositional of forces, thereby 'killing' the revolutionary 'dialectic'. By inverting the School's logic we can arrive at the notion of the Left attempting a counter-cooption: the opportunities and gaps offered by the superstructures developed by MNC should be coopted for leftist purposes. The need exists to educate both producers and receivers: firstly through media worker production which requires media training; and secondly through the creation of widespread media literacy in the broader public which I will term media education. These two categories, ideally, are interchangeable within the communication process.

³⁸ See Georg Lukács *History and Class Consciousness* (London: Merlin, 1971) and Karl Marx *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1981).

Media training: the production of media workers

By the end of the 1980s, South African media workers were generally of a low quality. Apartheid and the social crisis it caused chased many of the best media workers out of the profession. They had become tired of media restrictions, censorship and the narrow conservative sycophantism of most of the 'mainstream' media. Over the last two decades media managements (especially in the Press), through staffing and salary policies, discouraged the retention of good media workers. The effect on the circulation of information was catastrophic. The white South African ruling elite have, in particular, been the victims of a narrow culture industry. This significantly 'blinded' them throughout the 1980s by shielding them from the social dynamics of the antiapartheid struggle. (A similar

39 See Julie Frederikse, *None but Ourselves: Masses vs the Media in the Making of Zimbabwe* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1982)

phenomenon occurred in Rhodesia in the 1970s³⁹). Because South Africa's media 'consumers' have been provided with minimal media education, they are seemingly unaware of the extent to which they have been 'short changed'. This being the case, media managements in turn saw no need to upgrade their product and/or their media workers. A spiral of declining standards set in.

Media training should go beyond mere technical competence, the foundation of journalistic practice. Training in 'technique' should also attempt to stretch the understanding of 'technique' to incorporate an awareness of the technological possibilities inherent in any medium for use in improving democratic discourse, empowering people, and so on. This means media workers who understand firstly, the full range of media theories; secondly, their social context (and its mutability), thirdly, the meshing of existing media institutions into the power relationships in society; fourthly, possible alternative configurations of media organization/media technology; and, lastly, the relationship between existing media technology and research/development funding. All this requires an education in critical theory, where the connectedness of theory and practice is emphasized.

Although training should aim to produce critical, thinking media people, not technicians, it is equally important to recognize that it is also not enough to produce pure media (or communication) theorists. Media/communication theorizing can too easily become an ivory tower theoreticism and/or an intellectualism outside of a real organic concern with the social context within which media workers have to work.

Media trainees would ideally establish working relationships with community groups as a practical extension of the above training.⁴⁰ This could be achieved through the proposed nationwide MRC programme where trainees (and perhaps media workers themselves) could engage in 'community service'. In other words, in designing media syllabuses, it is important that the training institutions (and thereby the trainees) form some sort of 'organic relationship' with the energies of the social struggles taking place around them. That means learning to consult with community groups in a form which does not grant the media 'experts' a socially superior position by virtue of their skills.

Such direct interaction is also an excellent way of teaching media workers to distinguish which interest group wants what, and why. It helps develop an understanding of their relationship to different interests in society and to recognize the link between ideas and the real world. For example, media workers should be trained to recognize how any idea can be potentially coopted by vested interests and used by them for their own narrow purposes unrelated to the original intention of the formulator of the idea.

Currently, our universities and technikons tend to rely on

40 Keyan G. Tomaselli, Ruth E. Tomaselli, P. Eric Louw and Ansuya Chetty, 'Community and class struggle: problems in methodology', *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 1 (1988), pp. 11-25.

conventional methodologies and texts from Europe and North America. Teachers of media should first consider the extent to which training methods from the 'First World' carry with them the ideological baggage of highly developed technicist societies. Such methods would fail to equip future media workers with knowledge appropriate for the South African context, which has very different social problems to those of Europe or America. The uncritical use of 'First World' media-training methodologies represents another form of cultural colonialism. However, this problematic must not be allowed to develop into the extremist position of rejecting all European and American texts and techniques as necessarily 'imperialist/colonialist' and 'inappropriate' for a so-called 'Third World' situation. Such an attitude can only serve to retard the development of South Africa into a full participant of the global information economy.

Educating for media literacy

Citizens need to be active participants in a multidirectional social dialogue. As Enzensberger argues, the electronic media offer the framework for such a discourse. People need to: understand the media, understand the possibilities and limitations of media, have access to the media; be able to 'read' media messages critically, be in a position to make an ongoing input into a plural media system if they so wish; recognize the importance of their participation as citizens if democracy is to work, and believe that their participation does make a difference (that is, feel 'empowered'). Within such a democratic system, media workers will facilitate social dialogue, rather than be the 'experts' with sole access to the production of messages – in other words, the antithesis of 'top-down' (and manipulative) media systems in both western liberal democracies and in the Marxist-Leninist state socialisms.

Educating people in 'how to read' media critically – that is, to 'see through' the appearance of 'self-explanatoriness' – is a starting point. Media literacy would seek to generate a recognition that all messages are 'constructs' and carry with them the hidden ideology of both their creator and of the creator's context. The South African Left has generally had little difficulty in 'seeing through' the ideological constructs of the National Party (NP) (for example, the South African Broadcasting Corporation and Afrikaans Press) or of capital (for example the English conservative-liberal Press). But they have often been less successful in seeing through the ideology of white-owned 'black' newspapers like *City Press* or *The Sowetan*; and very uncritical when it comes to reading left-wing media texts. The latter are seen as 'truth'.⁴¹ In building a left hegemony, the danger exists of replacing one form of closed sycophantic media (seen

⁴¹ This grading of the 'ability / inability' of leftists to read media texts is derived from a series of ('Durban Media Trainers Group') workshops run by this author for various left wing activists during 1990.

during NP rule) with another equally closed and sycophantic (but leftist) communication system. Such a 'flip-flop' occurred, for example, in Zimbabwe. A democracy based upon participative citizens requires the capacity to read all media texts critically, even those with which one might 'agree'. Some argue the impossibility of educating everyone as critical media users. This argument, however, violates the very basis of the leftist project.

Educating critical message receivers is insufficient, however. This is because even critical reception implies a second-class status; and/or a *de facto* acceptance of the superior position of the message producers. If an interactive democratic (popular) communication system is to be constructed, then ultimately everybody has to be made a producer (or at least potential producer) of media messages. This should not be dismissed as a utopian idea, not even in 'developing societies'.⁴² The information technologies through which society can solve the impediments in creating fully popular democratic (dialogical) communication systems already exist. The task is to persuade policy makers to allocate the necessary resources to solve the problems and to create the popular communication infrastructures so as to realize latent possibilities. One way to nudge society into creating such a network and/or solving any impediments is to create a media-literate population who know what possibilities await it in a hegemony reordered around a popular communication system.

Despite the fact that creating a fully interactive media network will take a long time and considerable resources, a start has to be made somewhere. It would be unrealistic to implement a 'public sphere' network that completely blanketed the country on day one. Rather, it would have to be built incrementally. Because of the growing impact of media on the 'second-hand' world in which people now 'live', it may well be that in our contemporary world it is far more important to teach school pupils (and even those at tertiary level) how to critically read an everyday media text rather than how to critically read Shakespeare. Once one has learnt to be a critical receiver, one by definition 'understands media' (how they are produced, and their possibilities). Thereafter, the transition to becoming an active coproducer of media messages is not such a big step.

I am indebted to Keyan Tomaselli and Ruth Tomaselli for their criticism of various drafts of this article.

⁴² See K. S. Nair and Shirley A. White. 'Participation is the key to development communication', *Media Development*, vol. XXXIII, no. 3 (1987) pp. 36-40.

Indian experiments in media education

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Perhaps surprisingly, media education has aroused little interest among Indian educationists and mass-communication researchers. There are a number of reasons for this, which are considered in this article. After outlining these reasons, I discuss four experiments which have been made in media education in India, and show how these represent, in general terms, the current state of Indian media studies.

Impediments to the development of media education in India

There are several main reasons why media education in India has made slow progress. In the first place, the need for media education has not been felt to be particularly urgent, since exposure to mass media – even in urban areas – has yet to reach the levels it has in western countries. In reality, the mass media in India are still only *minority* media, as far as access is concerned. The reach and coverage of radio and television, for instance, are certainly extensive (officially estimated – but also controversially, given the far lower estimates made by the Operations Research Group, New Delhi – at ninety-four per cent and seventy per cent of the population respectively), but barely a third of the Indian population are in a position to afford a receiver. ‘Community’ listening and viewing are fairly popular, but both the central and state governments have dragged their feet in allocating funds for ‘community sets’. Low literacy levels (barely fifty per cent, considering the country as a

whole, according to the 1991 census) and woefully inadequate purchasing power, also limit access to the press. The cinema, accordingly, is the most popular medium; but here too, access is limited, because of the relatively small number of exhibition theatres and mobile units across the country (around 12,500 all told, as compared with a population of 900 million people). In recent years, nevertheless, the phenomenal growth of video and cable television across the country (the latter with now almost 3,500 distinct networks linking a VCR to local television sets) has provided small-town and rural populations with greater access to Indian films.

A second reason why the need for media studies has not been perceived as pressing is that the syllabuses in schools and colleges are so overloaded that it is almost impossible to introduce a new subject as part of the curriculum – or even to add a new unit to existing subjects such as English, the mother-tongue (one of the Indian languages), social studies or environment studies. Moreover, teaching methods are closely geared to helping students pass competitive public examinations, and so to gaining admission to profession-oriented institutes or to colleges and universities offering higher degrees in arts, commerce and the sciences. Media education simply has no place in this state-controlled and examination-led system.

A third possible explanation for the relative underdevelopment of media education in India is that media education is substantially determined directly by the state, since the Indian state plays a vital role in virtually all aspects of education, at all levels. Curricula to be followed, the timetable for studies, the courses to be taught, the texts and materials and the appointment of teachers are all prescribed by government rules and regulations. A body called the National Council for Education, Research and Training (NCERT), appointed by central government on the recommendation of the General Advisory Board of Education, formulates a 'model syllabus' in various subjects for the entire country, each state then adapts this syllabus according to the needs of the particular region, and, in each of the twenty-five states, educationists from the various constituent districts coordinate with each other to formulate the state syllabus. As a consequence of this centralized planning, schools have hardly any role in decision-making; school authorities can only choose their own medium of instruction and introduce minor changes within the prescribed framework. Currently, the emphasis in the prescribed framework is on themes or topics, rather than on 'subjects': 'value education', 'population education' and 'environment education' have increasingly assumed importance. But it has not been considered advisable to devise separate courses for each of these themes; instead, they are simply integrated into the subject matter of existing areas of the curriculum.

Finally, few schools (whether public or private) have the

wherewithal to be equipped with even rudimentary audiovisual materials, or to have their staff trained in media education. Though more than seventy university departments and private institutes across India offer courses in journalism and communication, the attempt, by and large, is to turn out media professionals rather than media critics or media educators. Few schools of education impart any training in media pedagogy, though much is made of the importance of using audiovisual aids in the classroom. It is true that educational technology is taught as an optional subject in some schools of education; but its relationship to media education is hardly ever touched on.

Four experiments in media education

Despite these and other restrictions on the development of media education in India, a number of significant initiatives have been made. Since media education is by definition both a threat and a challenge to communications structures (of which formal education is one), it has perhaps its greatest impact in nonformal set-ups; and indeed nonformal and distance-learning systems have started playing an increasingly important role in promoting literacy and related skills over the last decade in India. It is evident, nevertheless, that a country as large and as populous as India – with over 575,000 villages and with a student population that exceeds 100 million – needs a multi-system and a multi-media approach to education, in addition to traditional methods of literacy development.

A range of specifically media-education initiatives are significant in this context. Media education has been taught, for example, since the late 1970s in high-school classes in a few schools in Bombay, Hyderabad, Secunderabad, Calcutta and Madras – though only as a subject outside the formal school curriculum. The innovations made in each of these cities have been undertaken by enthusiastic individuals; the support of educational authorities to these essentially private enterprises has been rather lukewarm. A few courses in media education for teachers have been conducted in Bombay and elsewhere; but here, too, the education authorities have offered little encouragement. Schools of education are also reluctant to provide any space in their curriculum for short courses in media education. The most significant projects in India at present, as a result, are individual ventures developed largely in isolation from one another, and without state support ¹

The first Indian programme in media education was launched in the mid 1970s by the Amruthavani Communication Centre in Secunderabad. The programme was called a 'media utilization course' (MUC), and was directed at high-school students primarily

¹ For more detailed discussion see
Keval J. Kumar, *Media
education, communications and
public policy: an Indian
perspective*, unpublished Ph.D.
thesis, University of Leicester.

from convent schools in the cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The programme was (and continues to be, after more than a decade) a voluntary fee-paying course, held once a week outside school hours at the Centre (that is, not in a school environment). The Centre has published a range of booklets and textbooks which set out the subject matter of the two-year course, as well as the questions which, in its view, need to be raised. Close examination of the syllabus and these booklets (which have been produced for each of the major mass media: newspapers, radio and television, the cinema) suggests that the history, language, technical aspects of production, and types of programme or work in each medium are the topics accorded priority; the social, political and economic dimensions of media do not find any mention. Examination of the MUC's aims also reveals that the Centre's approach is essentially moralistic and protectionist.

The Xavier Institute of Communications, Bombay, has since the mid 1960s been teaching part-time evening professional courses in journalism, advertising and marketing, public relations, photography, audiovisuals and film production, and (in recent years) television production. In 1979, the Institute started a programme of media education for high-school students in Bombay. Like the Amruthavani venture, this project has revolved around a voluntary, fee-paying course, taught outside the formal school system and known as 'Mediaworld'. The course is run, on school premises, by a team of practising primary and secondary school teachers.

The main objectives of the course are 'to develop a critical attitude towards the media; to foster the creative imagination with regard to the media, and to develop a critical attitude to its values'. The expressed hope is that the course 'completes what the student learns in school, and widens his [*sic*] perception of the audiovisual culture in which we are all immersed'. The course seeks to achieve these objectives in twelve two-hour sessions, spread over two-and-a-half months. Three of the sessions deal with advertising, three with newspapers; four with the cinema. The final two sessions are devoted to practical projects like putting together an advertisement, a poster, a wall newspaper or a scrapbook, as well as to guided visits to film and communication institutes.

Unlike the Amruthavani course, 'Mediaworld' does not use coursebooks or texts; instead it employs its own changing worksheets and printed handouts for discussion and analysis. Typical questions raised during the sessions include: how deeply have the media affected you? What kind of films do you see? Are they all fantasies or are they based on reality? In whose hands is the control of the media? Is this control commercial, political or ideological? Why are advertisements called 'hidden persuaders'? Are all advertisements 'varnished lies'?

The Culture and Communication Institute at Loyola College, Madras, has conducted a media-education programme for high schools and higher secondary schools in Tamil Nadu since 1983 – the ‘International Year of Communication’ Known as an ‘educommunication’ programme (after the United Nations Development Agency term for ‘media education’, and formulated in consultation with Xavier Institute of Communications, Bombay), the project was started in response to the Vatican II decree, *Inter Mirifica*, and to the Pastoral instruction, *Communio et Progressio*, of Pope Paul VI.

The programme has two main objectives: firstly, ‘to impart media awareness and help students develop a critical appreciation of the media, secondly, to teach students active skills in mass media and group media. The emphasis in the Tamil Nadu experiment, accordingly, is on practical exercises; and the project has brought out a handbook entitled *An Introduction to Mass Media* for use in its media education courses

An equally significant (albeit short lived) experiment in media education was carried out in the early 1980s by Gaston Roberge at the Chitrabani Communication Centre, Calcutta This was essentially an attempt to encourage a group of young people to explore the cinema as a form of popular entertainment through informal discussion and reflection Roberge describes his methodology as ‘the method of discovery which is determined in pace and content by the students of a particular group, and by the film available at one time’. The method, he observes, is ‘synthetic’ (many subjects are dealt with simultaneously), ‘organic’ (activities involve all the students’ faculties); and ‘cyclic’ (the same subjects are dealt with several times at various levels).² For Roberge, it does not matter very much whether you start with film, advertising or any other particular type of media text; what is required is the probing of the general ‘media environment’. The media, therefore, are not to be seen as ‘art’ first and foremost, rather, they are a combination of commodities, experiences and environments.

2 For further discussion see
Gaston Roberge *Another Cinema
for Another Society* (Calcutta
Seagull Books 1985)

Does media education have a future in India?

As is evident from the descriptions offered above, media education is still at a very experimental stage in India; and perhaps significantly, the experiments have so far, in the main, been conducted by church-related organizations Although at least two of the projects have resulted in regular courses for the last decade or so, there has still been no systematic attempt made to evaluate any of the courses, the only evaluations carried out so far have been ad hoc and cursory ones, taking the form of feedback and comments

offered by the participants themselves

Four general principles can be discerned in the experimental ventures in media education described above (which represent what is going on in different geographical regions of the country). One common strand, for example, is a definite 'pro values' rather than 'value neutral' orientation. The values which the projects seek to promote are Christian, or, where this is not the case, at least broadly humanistic. A second common position is that the projects involve a critical but not entirely negative stance towards modern media and media structures, but the tendency remains one of seeing media products as 'art forms', rather than as popular cultural forms with a specific aesthetic different from that of traditional art or literature. Thirdly, media are for the most part considered in isolation from one another, and only rarely in explicit interrelationship; analysis hardly ever takes place of the sociocultural or socioeconomic context of media production and reception (this tendency is especially characteristic of the Amruthavani approach). Fourthly, most analyses confine themselves to investigation of content, instead of moving on to probe questions such as those related to authorship and production, or to the media as institutions and industries. In sum, the media-centred approach of the Indian projects leaves little time for study of the larger social contexts in which students and teachers *experience* the media.

The teaching methodology adopted in the media-education projects described above is open and loosely structured, partly because of their nonformal setting. No course admits more than thirty students, thus making it possible to have group discussion and practical work in small teams. In formal school settings, on the other hand, classes often have up to sixty students in small and crowded classrooms; in such circumstances, the 'talk and chalk' or lecture system alone appears to make sense. So far, as a result, scope for pedagogic innovation is perhaps the greatest advantage of teaching the media away from the formal school environment; doing so allows for an openness and a flexibility in curriculum and teaching method that would be impossible if media education is absorbed into mainstream education. At the same time, however, without the support of the school system media-education projects are inevitably ad hoc, taking place only occasionally and without any systematic organized programme of study over an extended period of time. In fact, media-education projects in India at present tend to be one-shot affairs, with little or no follow-up. More generally, too, where analysis of the media is concerned, at present there are few principles specific to the Indian context that have been enunciated to guide students or teachers. In the Indian context, therefore, it would appear that media education can become a serious subject of study only if it becomes part of formal education. Without formal recognition, it will remain at the experimental stage, and will

continue to be of only marginal significance. It is highly unlikely, however, that the state – which controls not only the educational system, but most of the media as well – will accede to the demands of a small band of teachers and parents lobbying for the integration of media education into the prescribed curriculum

Noises offscreen: could a crisis of confidence be good for media studies?

ALAN DURANT

Worth looking at, but Screen has always experienced difficulty in relating its concern with theoretical issues to the realities of educational practices, and remains, at the present time, very remote from the world of most media teachers

Len Masterman¹

¹ Len Masterman, *Teaching the Media* (London: Comedia, 1985, revised edition, 1989), p. 332

These words make up Len Masterman's entry on *Screen* in his useful appendix, 'Resources for media education', in the 1989 reprint of *Teaching the Media*. But much has changed since then. *Screen* has been separated from the Society for Education in Film and Television, and relaunched from its new base in Glasgow. More significantly, perhaps, the field of media studies has both diversified further into a broader 'cultural studies', and settled into institutional niches sufficiently stable to make its self-image as a marginal field within the humanities and social sciences appear something of a flag of convenience.

It is arguable, nevertheless, that some things do not change. Many people would say, for instance, that *Screen* has remained largely aloof from the practical concerns of media education, much as Masterman suggests. Beyond this, some might want to add that the considerable influence the journal has exerted – particularly in the United States – has created more distant admiration, among practising media educationists, than active adaptation into new kinds of pedagogy. To say this is not necessarily to overlook the

achievements of film theory over the last two decades. Nor is it to undervalue the force and political value of connections between work specifically on film (and more recently television) and more general questions of cultural politics, especially as represented in feminism.

Even accepting these achievements, questions of the precise relationship between media scholarship and educational practice can seem problematic. For that relationship is troubled by at least three factors which aggravate the delicate interconnections needed between the *theoretical* emphasis of film and media research and the *pedagogic* emphasis required in teaching. The three factors I have in mind are:

The largely unexplored educational consequences of shifts in theoretical positions within media studies. Such shifts follow from self-critiques within the discipline, and a move away from a relatively unified theory-paradigm towards far more disparate (often philosophically irreconcilable) approaches.

The continuing preeminence of university/college-level discussion and theory, as opposed to school-based work. This has had the effect of marginalizing debate, as regards school curriculum development, over the relative merits of specialized 'media studies' and more general or cross-curricular 'media education'.

The changing relations between media studies and cognate disciplines such as English studies and sociology. Each of these fields has significantly altered over the last two decades.

In this article, I explore a number of current difficulties of definition and practice within media studies. I suggest that, collectively, these may give rise to a 'crisis of confidence' in the field. After assessing the relationship between media studies and other fields, especially English studies, I comment on three particular problems in media studies: issues of *analytic method*, issues of *history* and issues of *language*. Work in each of these areas has been made more, rather than less, problematic, as the result of media studies' evident aim of disentangling itself from the baggage of those disciplines from which it emerged historically. I do not suggest that media studies is therefore without value. Far from it: the need is overwhelming. But agreeing on the existence of a need does not guarantee the suitability of existing responses to that need – hence the questions I want to ask.

Historical backdrop: the rise of media studies

No four-page summary of the history of an academic field – even of a relatively short history, such as that of media studies – could be

- 2 See for example Manuel Alvarado Robin Gutch and Tana Wollen (eds), *Learning the Media: An Introduction to Media Teaching* (London: Macmillan 1987), chapter 1 pp 9–38, or the descriptions offered throughout Masterman, *ibid*. Useful background can also be found in many of the chapters in Robert C. Allen (ed.) *Channels of Discourse: Television and Contemporary Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1987).

presented without recognition of its inevitable reductivism. But neither is any apology needed for presenting points for argument in the form of schematic historical narration, given that fuller accounts – at least of Anglo-American developments – are readily available.² Reductivism is especially likely, in fact, in the case of media studies. It is made almost inevitable by a diversity of aims, methods and applications, by differences in institutional arrangements, such as the difference between British and American traditions; and by the deep divide which exists between school and university programmes.

But there is something more surprising than the diversity, given the history. Media studies is still as clearly describable in terms of what it has taken along – or thrown off – in its emergence from other fields (especially *English studies*, *sociology*, and *vocational media training*) as in terms of its own current aims, methods or other defining properties.

As is well known, some early versions of media studies defined themselves in relation to – generally *against* – longstanding critical arguments in *English studies*. In many cases, the early polemic was against views such as F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson's criticisms, in *Culture and Environment* (1933) and elsewhere, of the morally corrupting effects of popular cultural forms. (I. A. Richards is sometimes included with Leavis and Thompson in this type of critique, in a surprising isolation of his well-known fears of the cinema and the loudspeaker from his active involvement in radio and television, including his regular broadcasts on language and literature, his efforts to produce a television series of Plato's *Republic*, or his enthusiastic filmmaking apprenticeship at Walt Disney studios in 1942.) As well as being described in Alvarado, Gutch and Wollen, the early divergence from English has been traced in historical accounts of literary studies.³

What the early arguments in the history show most obviously is an inflection of the literary concern with questions of *value*, away from affirmation of quality in a high literary canon towards reflexive analysis of what value is, and of what motivates modern high culture/low culture distinctions. Perhaps most eminent in this strand of the history is the work of Raymond Williams. Throughout his theoretical writing, Williams connected study of the long history of forms of communication and representation with their contemporary manifestations: he proposed ways of linking analysis of the press, theatre, literature and essays with that of modern cultural forms such as film and television, not only in his work on communications, but also in his essay on the future of English Literature.⁴ There are affinities worth noting here, between the directions of this kind of historical investigation – though only much later, as regards its political commitments – and debates over 'technologies of the intellect' in studies of orality and literacy, which have also stressed a

- 3 See Francis Mulhern *The Moment of Scrutiny* (London: New Left Books 1979); Margaret Mathieson *The Preachers of Culture: A Study of English and its Teachers* (London: Allen & Unwin 1975); Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1983). For a detailed account of I. A. Richards's attitudes towards media see John Paul Russo *I. A. Richards: His Life and Work* (London: Routledge 1989).
- 4 Raymond Williams *The Future of English Literature* – a lecture given to Oxford English Limited in 1987, reprinted in Williams *What I Came to Say* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1990) pp 147–56. The later stages of that essay read like a manifesto for studying contemporary literature largely through media texts.

5 For recent discussion of many of these issues see Jack Goody *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). A review of the relation between arguments over orality and literacy and political questions can be found in Brian Street, *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

relationship between the development and use of technologies of writing in a society and that society's other cultural forms and mode of social organization⁵

Entangled in the critique of received ideas of cultural value, nevertheless, a potentially competing current in media studies has implicitly emphasized affirmations, rather than interrogations, of value – what amounts to a *displacement* of traditionally canonical works by interest in works traditionally considered of less value (such as melodrama, thrillers, soap operas, quiz shows or hit singles). This inversion of previously established canons precipitates, in turn, the development of alternative media canons – feminist canons; avant-garde canons, kitsch canons, pedagogic canons. As such canons are formed through repeated selection of the same works for scholarly analysis and for inclusion in syllabuses, they can begin to sit uncomfortably with some of the larger theses about postmodernism developed from them. Paradoxically, the new configurations of texts can obscure one of the main interests which inspired them, interest in the process of (and often overdetermined reasons for) selecting texts in any particular way in a course or syllabus.

Arguably, as a result, when either a 'popular culture' or 'film culture' agenda is inscribed in a media-studies syllabus, this is likely to represent an *outcome* of a process of historical and theoretical argument as much as any traditional canonical syllabus can be said to derive from an implicit theoretical position or agenda. Whereas Williams's arguments ranged across many forms and centuries (exactly work within a 'long revolution'), a 'popular culture' approach, especially if it deals primarily with twentieth-century materials, tends to presuppose a process of historical critique in order to act on its contemporary implications. Even where canonicity within film history is explicitly considered, for instance, discussion is almost inevitably separated from serious investigation of the much longer relevant histories of books and publishing, or of theatre – let alone the history of styles of oral discourse. Short-circuiting large-scale historical questions which circulate in the definition of literary or artistic value, a media-studies selection of texts is likely to adopt a blend of three main stances on the question: its own political programme, often of a counter-hegemonic kind, signalling relative values of different texts included in the course (as in some traditional marxist approaches, or in what have been called 'recruitist' directions in feminist teaching); a kind of cultural relativism, in which text selection becomes a sort of syllabus mix'n'match; or else an implicit belief in the progressive character of 'popular', 'non-elitist' forms of discourse which displaces the older question of what 'value' means with investigation of what 'popular' means. The separation of what I am calling here a 'modern, popular culture agenda' in media studies from a larger framework of

historical analysis is one concern of my comments about 'history' below.

There is another line of development out of English which is relevant to the questions raised here. Each time students engage with a text in media studies, they call on skills of textual analysis, and media studies has developed a distinctive mix of descriptive and analytic skills. It has borrowed some skills from English (for example, being able to comment on dialogue, knowing roughly what a metaphor is), then developed a new and more specialized terminology regarding specific audiovisual modes of discourse (pan, montage, point-of-view shot, parallel cutting, gendered spectatorship, and so on). These distinctive terms and concepts make possible descriptions of the specific rhetorics of sound and image: what is widely known as either film 'language' or the 'signs and syntax' of film. Much of this distinctive film-work evolved out of Saussurean traditions, developing gradually from an investigation of 'codes' into a concern to relate semiotics in a principled way to issues of subjectivity and ideology. As this work progressed – much of it in *Screen* itself – the word 'language' increasingly took on specialized senses; and in that process, use of the term diverged from its changing meanings in adjacent fields of linguistics and sociology of language. In media work in schools, during the same period, practitioners maintain that, partly because of the organization of new school study programmes around speaking and listening, reading and writing, there has been a great deal of overlap between work on written and spoken texts (such as adverts, public announcements and newspaper articles) and the recorded speech which makes up much of the soundtrack of television and film discourse. Some of the consequences of different stages in the educational process presuming different ideas of what language means are the concern of my comments about 'language' below. Of special interest is the way that study of oral discourse, which in one obvious sense comprises much of television and film 'language', can disappear somewhere between literary definitions of English as analysis of the written, and the general 'signification' focus of media studies.

These concerns might well be of general interest to anyone curious about how the fields of film studies and media studies have arrived at their current terms of debate. But what makes them of more than general interest is a further important factor: that the development of media studies, in higher education at least, required a difficult, in many cases decisive, process of disciplinary break or institutional separation from the fields in which whatever work on media previously existed took place. In the early phases of media studies, arguments for studying media were often formulated partly as replies to orthodoxies of English. Such arguments (in many cases propounded by people working in English departments) could only

be peripheral to prevailing versions of English studies at the time – though many of the questions are now more evidently part of what English studies is about. The recognition that concepts of authorship, for instance, need to be set within complex determinations of production industries – and the challenge of seeing an author as in complicated ways an ‘effect of language’, rather than seeing language as simply instrumental of an author’s intention or creativity – provides an interesting illustration of the dialectical relation between the fields. Authorship arose first as a question in cinema studies as a way of claiming artistry and seriousness, on a par with literature or painting. Yet largely because media studies has shown why it is necessary to see authorship within social determinations, ideas of the ‘author’ within literary studies and in history of art have been slowly inflected, in ways that earlier sociological work on literary authors or painters had largely failed to achieve.

Autonomy for media studies was almost certainly a precondition for general theoretical advance during that formative period. But quite apart from reasons associated with a different history (that of cinema, later of television), a different corpus (initially one of films, later also of television programmes), and a different investigative focus (social and institutional, rather than personal, readings), work on film and television is widely recognized as having required disciplinary separation for another reason: to secure a space in which to explore new kinds of textual studies with a different *political*, as well as theoretical, character and set of objectives. It needed space to grow, away from the need for defensive argument or the ping-pong of polemic and counter-polemic. It was perhaps this which was most at stake in the struggle for new departments during the 1970s and 1980s – and which now brings so much intellectual vigour to people’s efforts to preserve the identities of those departments they set up.

Following the emergence of departments of film and media studies, concern with film and television in English departments has been confined to marginal gestures, such as commentary on token texts in modern literature courses; vague parallels between the literary and the filmic; and study of the processes of TV adaptation of novels and plays. It looks too much like disciplinary overlap, if more attention than this is given to media texts in English departments living next door to film or media departments. In schools, on the other hand, the question of overlap between media studies and work on written and spoken texts continues to be handled differently. In Britain, English teachers and media-studies teachers in schools are very often the same people; and through the organization of project-work, it is straightforward to interconnect work on different media. But the situation is not static, either in higher education or in schools. Even in universities, where

educational innovation, at least in Britain, seriously lags behind, English studies has changed and continues to change, to the extent that an institutional realignment of media studies and English may now be a good idea

During the same early phase in the history of media studies (and in Britain in part again through the bridging presence of Raymond Williams, as well as the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies), arguments developed for media studies to grow out of – to outgrow – *sociological studies*, especially as further refinement of the sociology of leisure and of literature. Such specialization brought about the emergence of early forms of mass communications research and cultural studies. Often growing out of work on nineteenth-century cultural and entertainment forms (such as the popular novel, promenade concerts, the press or magazines), work along these lines came to emphasize research problems such as the relationship between quantitative content analysis and the effects of television (including those which may result from depictions of sex and violence), issues of bias (and how bias can be determined on the basis of empirical research, as in the influential work of the Glasgow Media Group); and problems of the diversity and stratification of media audiences (often assessing the relationship between centralized power to influence attitudes through widespread distribution of ‘enjoyable’ texts, and local, idiosyncratic conditions of reception).⁶

⁶ See for examples of this work
Ien Ang *Watching Dallas: Soap
Opera and the Melodramatic
Imagination* (London: Methuen,
1985), Charlotte Brunsdon ‘Text
and audience’ in Ellen Seiter et
al (eds), *Remote Control*
(London: Routledge, 1989), David
Morley, *Family Television:
Cultural Power and Domestic
Leisure* (London: Comedia, 1986),
and, ‘Where the global meets
the local: notes from the sitting
room’ *Screen*, vol. 32, no. 1
(1991), pp. 1–15.

In conducting research of this type, theoretical work has increasingly offered sophisticated ways of relating texts (and the conditions of their production) to patterns in terms of social consumption and the circulation of ideologies of gender, race and nation. More than other areas of investigation, feminist research on women’s lives, values and attitudes, on women in education, and on women and culture, demonstrates the political value of close attention to the ways in which cultural forms are also sites of ideology – with television emerging as a prime agent for the reproduction of social values, and therefore unequal relations of power. Given the more evidently pleasure-driven forms of ideology which distinguish film and television from, say, public-health notices, school classes or family rituals, out of the general concern with ideology gradually emerges the distinctive interest of modern cultural studies in a politics of pleasure: pleasure as something socially constituted and regulated, and distinctive kinds of which can be speculatively correlated with different kinds of text. By drawing on works of the Frankfurt school, too, and later on Althusser, cultural studies was able to mark out a critical element previously undervalued in sociological research. It injected a needed theoretical dimension into established empirical and ethnographic methodologies.

7 A notable exception to this tendency can be found in the work of Terry Lovell in both fields. See Lovell *Pictures of Reality: Aesthetics, Politics and Pleasure* (London: BFI, 1980) and *Consuming Fiction* (London: Verso, 1987).

What is perhaps most significant in this strand in the history of media studies is the way it has emphasized concern with the relationship between texts, subcultures, institutions and ideologies: a concern that, despite a long history of marxist literary criticism, was struggling to appear at all back in English studies, where literary and nonliterary texts might, in different circumstances, have reasonably been expected to be studied in analogous ways.⁷ The development of cultural studies approaches foregrounded recognition of media as social and institutional – specifically as social institutions caught up in the economic and political relations of modern industrial and postindustrial societies. As a consequence of such work, it has become difficult to see cultural forms (whether films, radio programmes, CDs or T-shirt designs) as individual texts for discrete interpretation, as in the traditional emphases of English studies.

Here again, a dialectical relation between media studies and the disciplines from which it emerges can be seen. As regards English, the fact that books are things produced, published and marketed, with analysable social profiles of readerships and a variety of different social uses (for reading on the train, in the seminar room, at bedtime, and so on) has become much more of an issue for English as a result of audience research and reader-response study – much of it in media studies. So has the relationship between popular fiction, magazines and canonical ‘literary’ works. For sociology, on the other hand, media studies has had a different lesson: it demonstrates the necessity of acknowledging the centrality, in analysing social structures, of texts and modes of representation, ranging from books and other documents, through myths, rituals and other forms of social behaviour, it also indicates the importance in analysis of concepts of pleasure.

For the purposes of this article, however, there are two salient issues in the history. Firstly, there are difficulties presented by changing theoretical claims, made in cultural studies approaches to media, regarding linkage between subjectivity, textuality and ideology (especially between strongly deterministic ‘subject position’ arguments and weaker, ‘preferred reading’ emphases). Secondly, there is the relationship between critical modes of work, on the one hand, and a vocational aspiration and sense of identificatory pleasure which underpin much current student interest in the field, on the other. Contradictions between marxist-influenced condemnation and postmodern celebration of often the same texts and institutions deeply problematize any nonpluralistic philosophy of education which seeks to promote media studies as a pedagogy geared to critical media literacy.

One of the main, formative difficulties of media studies has been its ways of relating reflective theory and ongoing practice – or, to put things a slightly different way, its ways of deciding whether

'practice' in a study programme means learning a theory, performing critical discourse analysis on given texts or institutions; researching an industry, or making films and tapes. It is therefore significant that the third area – *vocational tradition in media education*: technical training, either in specialist film schools, or more generally in school education – is often considered a poor relation. This is the case not only literally (in that it is widely under-resourced), it is sometimes also thought to be tainted by its closeness to professional training for the industry, and with the development of instrumental 'skills' rather than those of critique. The 'poor relation' status is typically reflected in how practical components are made to fit with critical elements in syllabuses, and in what proportion. It can also be seen in the way that it is very often different (and generally less senior) members of staff who are involved in practical teaching, and that different external examiners are often called in to assess student work. In Britain, the unequal relationship is also clear in the way that practical media work has come to prominence far more in Further Education College 'communications' teaching than in university departments. Despite this unequal relationship with the other traditions of media studies, practical work nevertheless provides much of the inspiration among students to take communications and media courses. It is also implicitly, or for many students explicitly, connected with the possibility of media employment; and dissatisfaction is sometimes expressed by students where the gap between media-studies courses and potential media employers is too openly revealed.

The history of the 'training' dimension of media work, which at university-level is more widespread in the United States than in Britain, is one of uneven development. Reliving many of the difficulties faced by writing and journalism courses in higher education, courses in filmmaking gradually emerged in institutions such as the National Film School, in some polytechnics and colleges of art, and as postgraduate courses at a number of universities. During the same period, practical media work in schools was increasingly recognized as of value as 'creative expression' (it was given early praise, for instance, in the 1963 Newsom Report), and small-scale creative work gradually developed in the context of 'progressivist' or 'New English' approaches to teaching English in schools, because of its ready compatibility with the dominant pedagogic modes of project-work and groupwork methodology.⁸ Since the 1960s, some degree of creative work has been incorporated in school provision wherever technology and classroom numbers permit (with students creating magazines and school newspapers; devising miniature advertising campaigns; writing and editing film scripts or storyboards from short stories; setting up mini-radio stations, and so on). Shifts in technology have lowered costs and made such work easier.

8 For discussion, see Alvarado, Gutch and Wollen *Learning the Media*, especially pp 28–35. As regards the situation at primary levels, see also Cary Bazalgette (ed.) *Primary Media Education: A Curriculum Statement* (London: BFI 1989).

Several difficulties arise for the definition of media studies from this kind of work, nevertheless. For instance, evaluation of practical production (especially of collaborative work) challenges customary academic models of assessment. New kinds of educational thinking therefore have to take place, to permit assessment of tapes, diaries of production, model budgets and the various other products of creative media work. Given the culture of higher education – despite precedents set by procedures in departments of photography or painting – this area of evaluation remains underdeveloped. Advances are held back by a divide between academic and training cultures in education which continues to be replicated in the very identity of media studies.

The more pressing question for practical approaches to media studies, however, concerns the ways in which they devise procedures for relating theory and practice. In such relationships the difficulties of technical, scholarly and critical practices converge; and the politics – at both general and ‘tactical’ levels – are most open to question, and so most in need of open debate. One problem concerns the consequences of the disparity between oppositional ‘critical analysis’ traditions and mainstream radio, television and film production. As regards practical work, oppositional theory pairs most directly with kinds of alternative practice: feminist film production, avant-garde work and community media. This emphasis (partly qualified during the 1980s by the popularity among students of pastiche adverts and music videos) can appear to drive a wedge between the practice element and the industry-oriented training dimension of media studies. Partly for reasons of production cost, too, little attention is generally given to producing genres of popular television (quiz shows, soaps, thrillers, and so on), despite their recent revaluation in much critical commentary. This lack of interest in producing mainstream television genres highlights a problem in conceptions of ‘popular culture’ forms. Popular cultural texts are critically celebrated, but not actively contributed to. Instead active contribution continues more to reflect an ironization of popular culture prevalent in theory, and so rejoins avant-garde practice – in effect largely side-stepping recurrent theoretical questions of value when it comes to making, rather than commenting.

How many directions in media studies?

The general point of the mnemonic sketch presented here – with all its omissions and tendency towards caricature – is a self-evident, but often neglected one. Media studies programmes (like programmes in virtually all other academic fields) are composites, having forged apparently distinct identities out of a range of often contradictory materials in an overdetermined history. The current phase of media

education work, with its further subspecializations (for example, the separation of film studies from media studies, and from cultural studies) is one of internal reorganization and refinement, but in that process of specialization a range of more foundational issues in the history return.

It is arguable, for instance, that in the process of media studies disentangling itself from work within disciplines such as English and sociology, new pedagogic problems have been exposed as much as older problems resolved. This is one result of the way that the selectiveness which underpins further specialization has the effect of narrowing down the set of questions likely to be asked even as, historically, the field of cultural analysis is being opened up.

To investigate this claim, it is necessary to look at emerging difficulties of media studies more closely. Before doing this, however, it is worth identifying four distinct emphases in what I have so far referred to generically as 'media studies'.

Communication studies involves, predictably, analysis of theories of what 'communication' is, technologies and institutions, concepts of information, speech and gesture. Studies along these lines range from sociological approaches to mass communication (sometimes in distinct Departments of Mass Communication) through to applied discourse and conversation analysis (sometimes in distinct Departments of Speech Communication⁹). With such an emphasis, it is reasonable to expect analysis of concerns as various as 'communication audits' (Who talks or writes to who? What are the communication networks, in a hospital or large corporation?); study of writers such as Habermas, Rorty or Wittgenstein, on possibilities for mutual or social understanding, work on the ethnography of speaking; studies of selling television or newspaper advertising space, and techniques of public address. The general orientation of this broad definition of 'media studies' – often distinguished in higher education with its own name, 'communication studies' – allows either critical or vocational inflection. It can even blur the distinction between a resolute desire to resist ideological manipulation and a crude desire to learn how to achieve exactly that.

More narrowly, there is *film studies*, focused in the specificity of film as a cultural practice and of cinema as an institution. Typical topics investigated include individual films and directors, specific questions of textual analysis, such as montage; the development of theoretical understanding of film 'artistry'; structures of gendered spectatorship, periods, traditions and genres; analysis of the cinema as an institution and economy based around theatrical exhibition, and research into national and regional cinemas. To preserve its identity as a field, nevertheless, this emphasis has to maintain the

⁹ For general descriptions of work along these lines see introductory textbooks such as John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies* (London: Methuen, 1982), or Denis McQuail, *Communication* (London: Longman, 1975). In the area of 'applied discourse analysis' see also Max Atkinson, *Our Masters' Voices: The Language and Body Language of Politics* (London: Methuen, 1984) and Deborah Tannen, *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

distinctiveness of film, within an industrial complex of production and distribution increasingly linked to television, advertising through product placement and marketing of soundtracks, and home-video. It has also to counter arguments against its cultural centrality which are based on the eclipse of cinema by television and pop music as the defining popular art-forms or cultural experiences of the end of the century

Combining interest in film with radio, television and other media, a more general *media studies* emphasis typically explores television as an environment, bringing together issues of technology, delivery systems, policy and institutions. Radio is also studied, though less, and attention is likely to be given to MTV, satellite and the contemporary press; networks of crossmedia ownership; conventional representations of gender and race; bias and censorship; theories of media, from television 'flow' to postmodern video art; and sometimes also selected genres of photography (especially photo-journalism). The continuing definitional question is that of the relationship between textual or rhetorical analysis and institutional analysis, and the need to develop pedagogies which can demonstrate nonreductive connections between the two. There is also the problem of adopting a definition of media that includes all the above in its semiotic perspective, while excluding theatre, painting and books, including literary ones

Broadening again, *popular culture and contemporary cultural studies* sees film and television as instances of more general phenomena: forms and institutions which produce social meanings (sport, fashion, pop music, comics and so on). Working through subcultural and ethnographic, as well as semiotic, analysis, such work addresses issues of the significance of style, and can range (in this respect, like communication studies) from critical study to empirical research on behalf of marketing industries. A problem of precise focus remains, however. Current responses are formulated mainly in terms of concepts of 'popularity', 'industry', 'resistance', 'desire', or the political valorizations of popular culture (from the subcultural significance of local garage bands to the international significance of Madonna)

When isolated in this way, each emphasis is troubled by its own boundaries. One of the difficulties in distinguishing them, in fact, arises from the way that, in many institutions, a general version of communication studies or cultural studies subsumes a range of different kinds of work in film studies and media studies. In Britain, in many circumstances – given the resource constraints on higher education – the combinations of material which make up courses in practice reflect a range of planning factors besides any worked-out

intellectual balance of elements or theoretical project. Practical constraints – and disparate interests, skills and intellectual histories of staff members – invite pragmatic definitional blurrings. What seems surprising, nevertheless, is how easily a sudden identity-crisis in media studies can be precipitated by posing an obvious pedagogic question: as regards teaching, is the field's identity conferred by theoretical coherence (if so, around what?) or by an accepted educational pluralism?

Three trouble spots

The problems inherent in the question of coherence are not, finally, only to do with the corpus of texts or specific institutions being studied. Other types of question are at stake. Is television an 'art' in the specific senses that many film critics argue that film is? Does *Citizen Kane* (1941) fit any more closely with Kylie Minogue than with Franz Kafka or Katherine Mansfield? Should fifties films be on the same syllabus as 501s? Such questions call for worked-out responses to meta-questions of educational purpose and planning, and it is probable that – except where syllabuses are constructed on the basis of a very precisely defined theoretical position – programmes are content to act out unresolved complexities of the history of the field, as much as to plan on the basis of explicit criteria.

Could such criteria be found to support current definitions and priorities of the field? I want to explore this question, by taking as exemplary issues the intellectual responses made in media studies (taken in the general sense) to questions of 'analytic method', 'history' and 'language'.

Questions of research *method* are difficult in each of the subspecialisms outlined above. This is partly because of the diversity of approaches that have to be learned, and between which choices have to be made: historical, sociological and ethnographic techniques, necessary for the study of audiences and institutions; textual approaches, to facilitate even basic description of what is being viewed. Beyond these, there are frameworks of what might be called the psychoanalytic diaspora, where concepts such as suture or voyeurism depend finally on commitment to psychoanalysis and are only (in some sense) provable in analytic practice. Alongside these, there are practical approaches and reflections on them (budgeting; directing; lighting; off-lining, and so on).

It might be argued that what distinguishes the field of media studies is that different approaches have to a large extent blended productively, under pressure of energetic theoretical self-critique. The study of voyeurism in cinema-viewing, for instance,

interconnects notions of textual interpretation, structures of pleasure and subjectivity, and the apparatus and institutions of the cinema. Questions of genre bring together formal regularities in a selected corpus with historical and production conditions of the industry, and 'rules' for production and attribution of meaning to texts. Studying montage relates production techniques to understandings of the role of editing in creating meanings, and to structures of fascination and desire in the moving image. As regards method, then, it might be said that what constitutes the substance of the field's interdisciplinarity is its new 'set' of research concepts and procedures.

Questions of unity, consistency and compatibility should still be asked of these procedures. One thing in common across the various strands is a way in which they have coincided with a nexus of developments in 'theory' which are not reducible either to sociology, media studies or English psychoanalysis (Kristeva and Lacan); language and semiotics (Barthes, Bakhtin), theories of ideology (Althusser), political theatre (Brecht), and notions of fundamental shifts in cultural formation (Jameson, Lyotard). For a short time, many of these elements were forged on the film-studies anvil of what came to be called *Screen* theory. But with the unsettling of many of the theoretical positions that such work legitimized, dominant influences have come from elsewhere: from more recent directions in feminism; Foucault; postmodernism; and to a lesser extent from deconstruction. Through feminism especially, theoretical developments have retained links with political practice, and allowed a cue to be taken from notions of tactical or strategic appropriacy. In British secondary education, meanwhile, alongside prevailing currents of antisexism and antiracism, the intellectual and political links have in effect been back towards humanistic educational values, such as that of independent critical learning as part of informed and participative citizenship.

The brief sketch of theoretical provenance offered here serves to highlight problems which become apparent as the field of media theory is viewed at greater distance. While suggestive and challenging individual commentaries can be written *within* any of the given theoretical genres, there remains a problem of adjudicating between them. As regards teaching, there is in many cases also the problem of generating interest in accounts of media texts which claim attention while proclaiming the impossibility of theoretical metadiscourse. During a period in which no single theoretical paradigm predominates, there is a need for research projects which seek to establish new grounds of argument – and to make clear their points of consistency and incompatibility with current orthodoxies of teaching – more than for (possibly more prevalent) historical or 'text as case study' projects.

The need for speculative work seems pressing. It is widely

recognized that the theoretical project of media studies served during the 1970s and 1980s as an institutional opportunity for left colonization. But the opportunity for any given political orientation to occupy the domain of media studies now depends on new definitions of that domain, either by aim, corpus or techniques of investigation. Institutional identities require constant reproduction and updating, but media studies now rests on a confusing contradiction of methods. The 'coherence' of *Screen* theory and related positions coexists with other approaches in what requires, pedagogically, either a commitment to an unconvincing 'progressive tendency' umbrella, or else to a metastructure of liberal pluralism.

Is this the climate in which specializations within media studies are best made? As regards pedagogy, film provides an instance where arguments for teaching the field separately have explicitly drawn attention to its *specificity*. But it is worth considering the implications of translating this concept into educational practice. The theoretical definition of film as 'specific' arises at a level of critical argument beyond either basic considerations of ideology and culture (which can be instanced in most cultural forms), or other cross-media questions (for example, questions of genre, intention or interpretation). It is improbable that questions of film genre have nothing in common with problems of literary genre, radio genre or genre in painting or photography; or that issues of authorship in cinema have no relation to questions of authors in literature or of composers in music, or that 'reality-effects' in cinema have no relationship with issues of realism in literary narrative or historical narration. Equally, it is difficult to argue that ideology in film has to be investigated separately from ideology in posters, comics or church. Most of the impetus of 'theory', in relation to gender or ethnicity for example, has been in the opposite direction. The 'specificity' of film can be an enabling theoretical construct, but one which is not easily carried over directly into the organization of teaching.¹⁰

The educational, rather than theoretical, questions which then arise for film and media studies are these: at what point in any given programme of study should areas of commonality of enquiry and method be replaced by focus on the specificity of one medium, form or institution? How is it possible for work on film, as a specific practice, not to presuppose general arguments about genre or ideology that will have to be taught elsewhere – or else actively taught in film studies, but with extensive illustrative reference to other fields? These are central and unavoidable questions; and alongside work of general theoretical enquiry, therefore, it might have been predicted that at present media studies would be energetically engaged with such arguments.

Disciplinary separation certainly allows different access routes into advanced media studies (from art history, from sociology, or from

¹⁰ As regards arguments over 'specificity' and the interrelationship between media studies and cognate fields, one indication of interchange is the influence of particular articles. Note for instance, the very wide-ranging citation of Laura Mulvey's 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', first published in *Screen* vol 16 no 3 (1975), pp 1–18.

literature). But at the same time, it has another effect – it restricts scope for contrastive analysis. Increased specialization within media studies in universities – a move away from more polyglot aspirations of intellectuals after 1968, partly as a result of the arrival of ‘second-generation’ specialist media-studies teachers – narrows the reference-base for contrastive investigation. Without subscribing to Masterman’s view of ‘media studies across the curriculum’, it is possible to query the educational appropriacy of a possible fetishization of ‘film scholarship’, as compared with the broader world of difference in social discourse which is evident in ‘language and communication’ studies.

Recent research in film and media studies has added impressive scholarship to the *history* of film and television. But there are two major ways in which accounts of history remain problematic. Firstly, there are questions of how directions in the field’s own development relate to current pedagogy. Secondly, there are problems surrounding where the start-date is set for the media history selected for consideration in any given programme of study.

The history of the field’s own development is problematic because some ways of representing it can obscure shifts of epistemic modality that appear necessary in teaching, when using concepts from earlier phases of theoretical work. Film-theory pedagogy currently draws – possibly confusingly – on at least two conflicting traditions for representing its own history. There are historicist accounts, which view the concepts of film theory as dialectical building-bricks, concepts introduced – such as ideas of positioning or specific understandings of spectatorship – are presented as both established (in effect, the correct way to understand things), and yet as also provisional or problematic. Students have to go beyond the factivity of lectures and articles to check up on the troubled history and current status of concepts in order to find routes through minefields of ‘vulgar’ usage; and their use of such concepts is often protected by increasing numbers of scare quotes. On the other hand, there is a tradition of finally nostalgic presentation – such as Lapsley and Westlake’s otherwise valuable introduction to film theory in Britain;¹¹ writers in this tradition see the excalibur of film theory as being very much back at the bottom of the lake, with media studies facing a political ‘holding operation’.

What is in question is not just how the history is told, but how that telling shapes the pedagogic practice of media teachers. Importantly, there are inherited frameworks and vocabularies which can easily become, in teaching, not only separated from the history of their development, but also detached from the intellectual frameworks or contexts of practice in which they make sense. If such ideas are not to be presented dogmatically, their supporting frameworks – for example, for concepts derived from psychoanalysis

¹¹ Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1988). See especially pp. 218–19.

and semiology – need to be introduced within a broader history of ideas. Theoretical concepts need to be worked through in comparison with other, conflicting accounts and approaches, not all of which are self-evidently misguided or politically reactionary

Alongside these questions of the history of media studies itself, there are issues regarding the presentation of the history of communication and media. In planning courses, decisions are understandably made to introduce historical ‘background’ or context starting from beginnings of the relevant technology and/or institutions. But such origins are always problematic: the ‘hundred years of cinema’ could be dated differently on the basis of alternative technological and economic watersheds (the Zoetrope gives a beginning in the 1830s, the photographic magic lantern one in the 1850s, the activities of the Lumière brothers one in the 1890s). Textual landmarks can offer a different picture again (1895? relevant antecedents in Victorian melodrama?) When newspapers, radio and television are included in the definition of study, dates open up further: should studies take in the eighteenth-century development of newspapers and journals, or only the nineteenth-century development of a commercial publishing industry based on steam-printing? Should ‘historical background’ begin with the invention, in the 1840s, of the telegraph, or, in the 1870s, with the invention of the telephone and phonograph? Can students reasonably skip what some might now regard as prehistory, beginning straightaway with radio, television and fully-fledged talkies in the 1920s and since?

One justification for keeping the history short is that it is not possible to study everything, so boundaries must be set. But boundaries not only limit, they also constitute. Opportunities for making connections and contrasts can be lost when a programme reduces historical scale. Nor can it be assumed that students – at whatever level of an education system – will have acquired the larger history from other subjects they are studying (the relation of film history to the histories of the press and of theatre is illuminating in this respect). What might be seen as a narrowing or foreshortening of history can undermine media work in a number of respects: as regards what the terms ‘communication’ and ‘communications’ mean (face-to-face interaction, signs, rivers and roads, only later modern electronic networks and systems); as regards modes of employment (not only camera operators and disc jockeys, but soothsayers, authors, booksellers, agents, censors and editors); and as regards the mix of different discourse forms in the public domain, shaping the long history of orality, literacy and secondary orality.

The question for debate in all of this is: does the long history of communication in society *have* to be reduced and shortened, to allow study in any kind of depth or specificity? Or is it, in fact, only

possible to make sense of the present by selective but much larger, contrastive studies across contexts and periods, adopting the pedagogic principle of broad contrast to show up the scale of potential difference? The case is at least arguable that study of larger shapes in the history of communications – from cave paintings and the development of scripts, through printing, megaphones, postal systems, libraries, newspapers, telephones and television – may be a precondition for discovering, rather than merely being directed towards, questions it is relevant to investigate as regards the specific, contemporary forms and influence of electronic media and institutions.

Despite the fact that media studies has been centrally concerned with the concept of *language*, it has not always been interested in language in the sense of spoken discourse or utterances. This is another respect in which media education in schools parts company with much media education in universities. While in secondary schools, work takes place on the language of texts such as adverts – so contributing to the development of skills of more general linguistic analysis – in universities ‘language’ in media studies tends to follow a distinct tradition of its own. While there is a considerable volume of work in critical discourse analysis and media stylistics,¹² this work has tended to remain marginal within media-studies programmes more directly influenced by specific readings from Saussure.

In the development of film and television theory, first active understandings of language come from Saussure’s work, as selected parts of the *Course in General Linguistics* (1915) are developed, following the proposal of a new science of semiology, into a more general structuralist account of signs. (Before this, it has been suggested, language was assumed simply to distort or misrepresent a more direct truthfulness of the image.) Early work by Metz and others formulated semiotic principles in order to investigate codes of film language, defining concepts of film syntax using notions including that of contiguous relations offered by the concept of the syntagm. What distinguishes later directions in this tradition, however, is that the concern with codes was quickly inflected towards the relation of the text to the subject or viewer, initially through ideas of Althusserian misrecognition, then through Lacanian and other readings of subjectivity, sexuality and textuality – often understood in terms of positioning.

Metz’s writings are not only detailed investigations of film; they mark a milestone in the linguistic analysis of metaphor and metonymy. What happens in the traditions of work which derive from Metz, nevertheless, is that ‘language’ becomes used increasingly figuratively. the problems of the subject in language, as part of a theoretical problem of linking signification with ideology

12 See, for example, references in Dick Leith and George Myerson, *The Power of Address: Explorations in Rhetoric* (London: Routledge, 1989); Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 1989).

and with the economy, overtook concern with the detail of what goes on in any given utterance. Because of the particular questions it was asking, discourse analysis in media theory came to mean primarily Benveniste – then later, in a more dramatic shift away from linguistics, Foucault and selected ideas from Bakhtin – during the same period when linguistic analysis of discourse began to draw extensively on emergent work in pragmatics. For most purposes the distinction between use of ‘language’ to mean spoken or written utterances (and the ways they create meanings), and ‘language’ used to mean the compound signifying processes of film and television, is clear enough. But the divergence began to create difficulties, when film theory came more to recognize that processes of interpretation of a text are governed by factors other than interaction of structures of the text itself with psychical structures and structures of the cinematic apparatus; such processes involve at least – in addition to a variety of aspects of social context – also important cognitive processes of inference which cannot be investigated, except at a disabling level of generality, by appeal to modes of discourse analysis derived from Foucault or Bakhtin.

Despite exposure of the need to look in much greater detail at elements which make up the composite discourse of film and television, the relatively marginal field of media stylistics has still not come to any prominence in media studies, at least in higher education. Indeed given the persistent idea in theories of narrative of the image-track as a kind of metalanguage or ‘truthful discourse’, it is reasonable to suggest that there is still a symptomatic inattention in media studies to soundtrack.¹³ This is the case despite the way in which practitioners in the industry refer to many genres of television as merely ‘radio with pictures’. As regards debate over television advertising, too, relatively little interest has been shown in, for example, Michael Geis’s *The Language of Television Advertising*, which relates questions of responsibility for claims made in advertisements to systematic – if now dated – analysis of pragmatic inference, seeking to relate the level of textual analysis to questions of intervention in law and social policy.¹⁴ Media studies can become so involved in investigating the language of cinema that it no longer sees itself as needing to talk precisely about language in cinema.

To check whether this is actually a problem, it can be useful to discuss with students the specific meanings created by intonation in a given stretch of dialogue, or to invite comments on the semiotics of accent. The theoretical question of the limitations of ‘metalanguage’, in such circumstances, can seem of little concern by comparison with the usefulness of developing a metalanguage that might in due course be questioned.

That descriptive work on language can be of importance may be evident in the following list of possible areas for closer attention: the

¹³ Different kinds of exception to this tendency can be found in Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London: BFI 1987); Steve Neale, *Cinema and Technology: Image, Sound, Colour* (London: BFI/Macmillan, 1985) esp chapters 4 and 6; Simon Frith, ‘Music for pleasure’ *Screen Education*, no. 34 (1980), pp. 50–61; Alan Durant, *Conditions of Music* (London: Macmillan, 1984), chapter 4.

¹⁴ Michael L. Geis, *The Language of Advertising* (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich 1982).

relationship between written scripts and spoken dialogue, the generically-defining properties of prosodic and paralinguistic features of speech, in horse-racing commentary, football results, continuity announcements and newsreading; use of repetition and other forms of distinctive patterning in speech-to-camera and in disc-jockey talk, the semiotics of accent, fully across cinematic production and television output (especially in context of international film distribution, through which accent distinctions take on new and different meanings); the role of intonation in creating information structure in spoken discourse, and so in creating point-of-view and potentially bias; use of 'selectors' in constructing mode of address in television and radio. Work in such areas can also have a historical dimension. It might investigate, for instance, the shift in mode of address, in the history of television documentary and outside broadcasting genres, which accompanies changing responses to the split communicative contexts of television's 'communication events', from use of registers appropriate to the context of utterance in early broadcasting ('addressing the nation'), the style of announcements has gradually moved towards registers appropriate to the context of reception ('someone invited into your home') Topics for study of this kind illustrate the way that features of speech contribute to the meanings of media texts, as they become, when recorded, a new kind of textual writing. The contribution of such 'spoken writing' to our contemporary media environment can only be studied by combining interest in general and theoretical questions of discourse with attention to matters of detailed description.

One argument for not pursuing this kind of linguistic analysis is that students will already possess skills for descriptive language-work before they examine media texts in specialist courses. But this is a disingenuous position. Not only does it fail to reflect most media studies teachers' experience, it views awareness about discourse as something decisively acquired rather than something to be cumulatively explored. It also underestimates the extent to which investigations of recorded dialogue require as much delicacy as analyses of other aspects of film or television 'language'. Another more precise form of the same argument, effectively for not giving time to such work in university programmes, is that recent emphasis on oracy in schools – where speaking and listening have now been incorporated into curricula – will enable students to connect their school-work on kinds of spoken discourse generally with media discourse in particular. A difficulty then arises, however – in what is for media studies another 'generation' question – as students who have been schooled in analysis of spoken discourse move on to university: how will media studies teachers in universities respond to the insights and frameworks of discussion students bring to class, when their own analytic terminology regarding discourse operates within so specialized, or circumscribed, parameters?

Prospects

My argument overall is this the force (and decisiveness) of media studies' separations from the disciplines out of which it emerged not only precipitated a phase of outstanding theoretical work, it also created a serious hiatus between film and media theory and other cognate fields. Following qualifications to a wide range of theoretical positions in media theory during the 1980s, the established shape of the field may now be held in place partly by what may amount to various types of intellectual foreclosure. If this is so, then it is a situation which invites renewed discussion of the basic coherence or distinctiveness of media studies (especially film studies), as opposed to broader cultural studies on the one hand or an enlarged domain of English studies on the other

At least two familiar arguments might be made at this point One is that the *prominence* or saturation of modern media in society necessitates that there should continue to be a distinct academic field dealing with them, this view sees contemporary film and television as, in effect, the vernacular 'literature' that should now replace the classics of English literature – in a parallel historical movement to that through which English literary studies came into existence during the nineteenth century in part as a substitution for classics and some strands of religious instruction. This is what might be thought of as the 'television is the literature of our day' argument. It is persuasive, and it fits with a range of intellectual positions on literacy, on participative citizenship, and on critical empowerment in relation to the techniques of representation of contemporary societies. In terms of educational policy, however, it allows – even requires – that studying film and television should overlap significantly with studying language in other cultural forms, including kinds of literary and nonliterary discourse, since our media environment is one part of an intertextual mix between secondary oral and continuing literate forms (The historical dimension of the argument precisely presupposes a kind of continuity of social function between books and television) While this argument certainly makes a case for media studies, it is a case for media studies in a broad form which interconnects with English and cultural studies.

The other argument is that the specialized *theoretical understanding* which has been made possible in film and television research over the last two decades necessitates that there should continue to be a distinct field – or possibly a number of distinct fields – of media studies. This is what might be called the 'exemplary theoretical discipline' view of media studies But this view may not be as persuasive now as it might have seemed ten years ago, for three reasons Firstly, increased interdependence of the media industries (newspapers, television, popular music), linked

with developments of new multi-media technologies, crossownership and vertical business integration, suggests that comparisons and contrasts *across and between* media are likely to be more suggestive than exclusive study *within* any one single form or medium. The need, in such a perspective, is again for a *range* of skills and different kinds of cultural study. Secondly, the cognate fields which conferred on film studies its historic theoretical mission have subsequently undergone their own reforms, and now probably match media-studies, argument for argument. Thirdly, students setting out on specialized media study programmes are unlikely to be aware of a number of the theoretical arguments of the 1970s and 1980s which have run their course; yet because of hierarchies of teaching and grading – and given the dominance of one theory-paradigm in the media-studies secondary literature – students' course writing may still have sedimented within it the various historical strata of the discipline. Student work runs the risk, unless intellectual backgrounds to a range of alternative theoretical paradigms are introduced as serious alternatives, of becoming in effect diglossic: in commenting on a film or programme, writing switches between passages which retell the story or offer impressionistic commentary, and sections dense with received concepts from the theoretical literature. In such a context, the often anxious, epistemological and interpretative questions of film theory may be overtaken by kinds of more celebratory academic discourse which do not worry so much over conditions of explanation: the interest of the cultural claims being made may even disguise the weakness of the reasons for believing them.

This is the context which, in my view, suggests that a crisis of confidence in media studies might in the long term prove beneficial, especially in universities. Faced with the complexities of defining specific aims and methods in advanced media studies, programmes appear to need, at least temporarily, exactly what media studies struggled with English and sociology to get away from: a broader range of fundamentally different positions seriously and openly argued for and taken up, and which therefore allow for a more genuinely dialogic mode of pedagogy. One way to achieve this is through closer connections between sociology, English and cultural studies than are typically the case at present. The exact forms of such cooperation and realignment are something that could only be worked out when discussion has already taken place over areas of common interest. What seems at least as likely, however, is that division between secondary and university perspectives on media studies – and between media-studies lecturers, on the one hand, and English and sociology lecturers, on the other – may virtually paralyse the field at the very time when the need and demand for it, as seen from outside – as well as the challenges within it – are greatest.

I am grateful to Sarah Thornton for detailed comments on an earlier version of this article

reports and debates

Lack of bucks riles Canucks: public broadcasting taking the heat in Canada

MARC RABOY

The Lower St Lawrence town of Rimouski, Quebec, is the last place one might expect to see street demonstrations in the frozen dead of an unusually bitter Canadian winter, but the townfolk of Rimouski were up in arms in the winter of 1990–1 after the feds took their tv away. Rimouski, Matane and Sept-Îles in Quebec, Goose Bay and Corner Brook in Newfoundland, Sydney, Nova Scotia, Saskatoon, Calgary, Windsor and even Toronto lost local Canadian Broadcasting Corporation stations in cutbacks announced by the national broadcasting service.

Ironically, on the same day last December when the cuts were announced, the House of Commons adopted an upbeat new Broadcasting Act stating, among many other things, that the Canadian broadcasting system provides 'a public service essential to the maintenance and enhancement of national identity and cultural sovereignty'.¹

Now you don't need more than two Canadians in a room to spark a debate that will never end about the meaning of national identity and cultural sovereignty. On the other hand, put three Canadians in the room, and you would find at least two of them 'moderately or strongly opposed' to the CBC cutbacks.²

This highlights the quintessential characteristics of Canadian broadcasting, which have remained basically unchanged since the 1930s, and which can be summed up in this way: people in Canada view broadcasting *institutions* (as opposed to the particular

1 'Broadcasting Act *Statutes of Canada* (1991) chapter 11 art 31b

2 Angus Reid/Southam News poll 29 December 1990

programmes they offer) as part of the social fabric, and tampering with them is likely to become a contentious political issue; politicians in Canada recognize this and are prepared to make a rhetorical investment in popular sentiment, while dealing with broadcasting strategically as they go about carrying out their specific agendas, the various sectors of cultural industry play the people and the politicians against one another in their (generally successful) campaign to make broadcasting as profitable as possible.

More specifically, this situation tends to play itself out in three areas of conflict, concerning: firstly, the relationship of publicly and privately owned services in the overall broadcasting environment; secondly, the institutional role and structures of broadcasting within the Canadian political framework; thirdly, the social vocation of broadcasting.

Canadian broadcasting in the 1980s evolved according to the same pattern that marked all of the 'western' countries (Europe, North America, Australia) during that time. Canada, too, experienced the withdrawal of the state from its traditional responsibilities towards public-service broadcasting, and the increased economic liberalization and expansion of market-based broadcasting services. But the structural and regulatory developments of Canadian broadcasting have been strongly marked by their historical specificity and by the remarkably politicized nature of Canadian broadcast policy making.

The Conservative government elected in 1984 had as its main political objectives the negotiation of a continental 'free trade' agreement with the United States, and, internally, 'national reconciliation' of the constitutional wrangle between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Economically, it aimed to reduce the public debt and create new opportunities for Canadian capital. Broadcasting policy was strongly affected by all of these aims.

The free trade agreement, for example, was strongly opposed by Canadian nationalists. Early on, soon after beginning the negotiations with the US, the Mulroney government pledged publicly that cultural industries would not be placed on the table. In fact, the accord, which took effect in 1989, provides a grey area in which certain aspects of cultural activity are protected (ownership requirements, for example, or subsidies restricted to Canadian nationals), while others are not (Canadian cable companies must now pay copyright fees for American signals they previously picked up 'free', for example). But the need to counteract opposition to the accord is one reason for the strong nationalist rhetoric that continues to mark broadcasting policy statements, and which is clear, for example, in the new Broadcasting Act.

With respect to Quebec, Mulroney ambitiously sought to attenuate the persistent conflict that marked the sixteen-year regime of his predecessor, Pierre Trudeau. The cornerstone of his policy

was the so-called 'Meech Lake Accord', which proposed to recognize Quebec as a 'distinct society' within Canada. Meech Lake was rejected in June 1990, but, in broadcasting, the federal government has promoted a policy that bureaucrats in Quebec City consider to be an expression of 'Meech before its time'.

Since 1985, policy on French-language television has been made by a joint Ottawa-Quebec committee operating alongside the formal decision making structure. This committee has initiated, for example, the introduction of new private television stations in Quebec, 'Canada-Quebec' participation in the international francophone satellite service, TV5, and a range of subsidies to Quebec broadcasting entrepreneurs (The fact that Ottawa and Quebec are on the same wavelength regarding broad economic policy has certainly helped this process)

The new Broadcasting Act, furthermore, specifies that 'English and French language broadcasting, while sharing common aspects, operate under different conditions and may have different requirements'.³ This is a significant departure from the unitary policy that had marked the historical development of two parallel but nominally symmetrical broadcasting systems in Canada, in each of the 'official languages'.

The government's policy of fiscal restraint has been felt most strongly in the reduction of support for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Annual funding of CBC operations has remained virtually at the same level since 1980 in real dollar terms, despite the obviously rising costs of meeting its obligations. Several times since 1984, the minister of finance has made surgical incursions into the CBC's budget – often to take away new funds injected previously by the minister of communications.

In this process, it has been left to CBC management to determine where and how to cut services, and the government has developed the particularly odious habit of washing its hands of any responsibility. But the chickens may be coming home to roost. The December 1990 cuts targeted *local* and *regional* services, at a time when the national government is perceived by communities throughout Canada as especially remote, elitist and self-serving.

As in many European countries, since the 1980s there has been an overall shift in emphasis from the 'public' to the 'private' sector as the driving force of broadcasting. In Canada, an important legacy of the Trudeau Liberals was the Broadcast Program Development Fund (Telefilm Canada), created in 1983, and the main instrument of the privatization of Canadian dramatic television production

Through Telefilm, hundreds of millions of dollars in public funds – much of which used to go to the CBC – now go directly to independent producers by way of a bureaucratic agency whose purpose is to grease the wheels of industrial development. The programmes end up being shown on both public and private

3 'Broadcasting Act', art. 31 c

networks, but the money, instead of being allocated to a public corporation, accountable to its public-service mandate, goes to businessmen. The government, meanwhile, meets its objective of promoting private industry without having to bear the political ill-will that would come from direct privatization of the CBC.

These trends will likely continue in the 1990s, but the dynamics of broadcasting in Canada often push things in unpredictable ways. As self-evident as it may seem to say so – and I suppose this applies to broadcasting in other countries as well – Canadian broadcasting is driven by politics and economics, but the role it plays in society is social and cultural.

For example, one of the interesting by-products of the 1980s was that the whole gamut of sociocultural groups in Canada became increasingly militant and aggressive with respect to their demands and expectations of the Canadian broadcasting system as a whole (that is, public and private elements combined).

Women and ethnic minorities have pressured successfully for industry-wide codes governing role-stereotypes in broadcast programming and advertising. Aboriginal groups have set up important autonomous radio and television networks, with varying degrees of public funding support. Largely as a result of intense, organized pressure, the new Broadcasting Act includes clauses referring to employment equity; the equal rights of men, women and children; community, educational and alternative programming services, access for disabled persons; and the obligation of broadcasting to reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society, as well as its linguistic duality and the special place of aboriginal peoples.

Organized groups in Canada see broadcasting as constituting an overall *environment*, whose well-being depends on an ecologically sound balance between national and regional services, foreign and Canadian programmes, professional and communitarian production practices, entertaining and enlightening content. Achieving the environmental balance depends on maintaining the predominance of the idea of public service, as the organizing principle of *all* broadcasting in Canada – that is the point of the policy article of the new Broadcasting Act.

In this context, one can begin to comprehend the outrage and mobilization that followed the CBC cutbacks announced last December.⁴ The issue was not simply the familiar one of a public broadcaster forced to reduce spending: the question was where and how the cuts were being applied. The closing or reduction to a single newscast of eleven local stations has meant the elimination of more than 140 local or regional programmes and 1,100 CBC jobs (as well as further hundreds of freelance contracts).

For the CBC, the cuts meant the abdication of local television to the private sector (radio was not severely affected by this round of

4 A cross-section of press headlines conveys the extent and flavour of the movement. 'PCs accused of hurting Canada' (*Globe and Mail*, 6 December 1990). 'Rimouski: un spectacle-mobilisation' (*La Presse*, 12 December 1990). CBC employees granted \$15,000 to study purchase of Sask. station (*Montreal Gazette*, 17 December 1990). 'Levee des boucliers contre Masse sur les coupures à R-C' (*Le Devoir*, 21 December 1990). Windsor fights station closing (*Montreal Gazette*, 9 January 1991). Les maires de Matane, Sept-Îles et Rimouski demandent à R-C de garder une station ouverte (*Le Devoir*, 21 January 1991).

5 'Broadcasting Act' art 31 m 2

6 Readers might look at an editorial in *The Economist* of 23 June 1990 (whose cover line read 'The end of the nation-state?') which drew a parallel between the independence movements of Quebec and Lithuania 'Canada and the Soviet Union, despite their many differences have one thing in common', wrote *The Economist* they are countries moulded by conquest, not by consent

cuts) – something the entrepreneurs have been clamoring for since the first private stations were created in 1961. Under the mandate of the Broadcasting Act, the CBC has a duty to 'reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions' ⁵ The corporation now intends to meet that responsibility by producing one newscast in each province, and a handful of national network productions originating in regional centres. All other CBC programmes will originate in Toronto (English) or Montreal (French) and be broadcast from coast-to-coast.

This is of dramatic consequence in a country like Canada which, contrary to the prevailing mythology, is held together not by its national institutions but by the *tension* between the national centre and the regional peripheries. It is especially dramatic at a time when, in the wake of the failure of Meech Lake, a majority of the population of Quebec is in favour of some form of political sovereignty and the Quebec government is taking an increasingly autonomist posture in its dealings with the rest of Canada ⁶

It is important to recognize that in the peculiar universe of Canadian political life, the CBC is perceived not only as a public broadcaster, but also as a federal government institution. So in protesting the CBC cuts, people were not so much responding to a government attack on the CBC (of which the cuts were a direct result), but to a CBC attack on them. Tellingly, Canada's self-proclaimed (and only) national newspaper, the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, headlined an editorial: 'The CBC has handled its budget cuts sensibly'. Seen from the centre, the decision to sacrifice local services for national ones was sensible, but it has not been seen this way anywhere outside Toronto. At any rate, the result is a truncated and seriously weakened CBC.

Paradoxically, the mobilization against the cuts became a national unifying force. The 23,000 member Friends of Canadian Broadcasting sent its supporters detailed agit-prop kits complete with instructions on how to harass their local MPs (phone them at home, fax them at the office). In mid-March 1991, dozens of groups appeared before a week-long Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission hearing to oppose the CBC's formal application to eliminate the targeted services. (The CRTC eventually rubber-stamped the changes.)

The mobilization also crossed Canada's usually divisive linguistic boundaries. An ad hoc coalition formed to lobby against the cuts included not only anglophone organizations like the aforementioned Friends, but groups with names such as l'Alliance francophone pour la radiotélévision publique, la Coalition pour la défense des services français de Radio-Canada, l'Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes and la Fédération des francophones hors-Québec. In all, member organizations claimed to represent over 2 million people

7 The breadth of the coalition is equally impressive and includes not only citizens' groups and public broadcasting lobby organizations, but associations of creative workers (the Alliance of Canadian Cinema Television and Radio Artists, Canadian Actors' Equity, the Association of Television Producers and Directors, the Canadian Conference of the Arts, Canadian Independent Record Production Association, Canadian Wire Service Guild, the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians the Writers' Union of Canada and the League of Canadian Poets) and mainstream labour organizations (Canadian Auto Workers, Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Canadian Federation of Students Canadian Labour Congress Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Metro Toronto Labour Council, the National Union of Provincial Government Employees the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Canadian section of the United Steel Workers of America)

8 The task force had just reported as this article was going to press. Its principal recommendations include a three year moratorium on the introduction of new services a reduction of advertising on CBC television from twelve minutes per hour to eight, and the convening of an industry-wide summit meeting 'to decide on a strategy aimed at strengthening the industry's economic base and its ability to compete in world markets. The report (Canada *The Economic Status of Canadian Television* 1991) has so far been received favourably by the industry and cautiously by the government.

(out of a total Canadian population of some 26 million).⁷

Public outrage notwithstanding, the CBC's problems are far from over. After five years of study by a string of committees, culminating in the Broadcasting Act, the government has set up yet another task force to report on the economic situation of Canadian television. This latest move was prompted by the uncharacteristically disappointing balance sheets that have begun to bother private broadcasters since the onset of the recession. The creation of new commercial services (additional stations, pay-television and speciality satellite-to-cable services) and the looser regulatory environment of the 1980s bloated the marketplace and there are now too many players. While advertisers and cable distributors are enjoying a boom (more than seventy-six percent of homes in licensed areas were cabled in 1990, and that figure was growing by about two percent a year), the providers of programme services are in agony. They have been pressuring the government to put a cap on CBC advertising revenue (currently thirty per cent of the CBC's television budget), if not withdraw the public broadcaster from the advertising market altogether.⁸

This would not necessarily be a bad thing, *if* the government were prepared to cough up the additional \$250–300 million a year necessary to make up the shortfall. Ever mindful of their role as good corporate citizens, and willing to help out with realistic proposals, the broadcasters are suggesting the government do just that: beef up the CBC so that it can concentrate on providing culturally uplifting programmes without having to scabble for (their rightful) advertising lucre.

The 13th Créteil International Women's Film Festival, 5–14 April 1991

GINETTE VINCENTEAU

One of the most lively forums of debate this year at Créteil was the women's toilets, where a continuing graffiti dialogue criticized the absence of lesbian films. Another was the ticket office, where a man complained about the festival as a 'women's ghetto' and asked – apparently ingenuously – whether there were any festivals of men's films. Too mainstream for some, too marginal for others, Créteil, it seems, is forever caught in this uneasy space between these two unsatisfactory positions. As in past years, Créteil's audience – and particularly its growing international contingent – is aware, and critical, of the festival's hegemonic practices, both ideological and aesthetic, in what is otherwise perceived as an 'alternative' event. Meanwhile, the French public at large still disavows the most elementary manifestations of the male bias of its culture.

Nevertheless, in his unthinking way, the man at the ticket office posed the question of the specificity and rationale of Créteil, beyond its marketing, media and celebratory functions, which are not in doubt. There is still a thrill in seeing Věra Chytilová or Ann Hui climb on stage to receive flowers under thunderous applause. The value of their recognition as filmmakers *as well as* 'women filmmakers' means that the festival, in this respect, has not outlived its usefulness. Chytilová, Hui and others, may be feted in other festivals, but Créteil adds something specific. As the output by women directors continues to expand, the point of the Créteil festival, increasingly, is that it confronts us with the more difficult

question of what is 'women's cinema', and offers a number of overlapping and conflicting answers.

When asked to outline the trajectory of the women's films shown by Créteil over its thirteen-year history, Jackie Buet replied that 'the urgent preoccupations of the 1970s have changed. There is perhaps less of a polemical, demanding, stance, but the message is all the clearer because the images and the style are stronger'. She was stressing both the festival's continuing claim for art cinema, and the increased diversity in films directed by women. The selection of features in competition certainly confirmed her assessment of the move away from the militant focus on women's issues of the 1970s and early 1980s, and towards 'strong style', of which Suzanne Osten's *The Guardian Angel* (*Skyddsangeln*, Sweden, 1989), Frouke Fokkema's *Vigour* (*Kracht*, Holland, 1990), and Lucy Philips's *Steal America* (USA, 1990) are particularly good examples. *The Guardian Angel*, about a plot to assassinate a minister and his family, tackles the 'unfeminine' issue of terrorism, though the film remains carefully unspecific: it is set in an imaginary country, and several image montages widen its brief to terrorism and violence in general, ambiguity is also at the thematic core of the film. Inevitably perhaps – at least for a non-Swedish audience – the elegant look of the film evokes Bergman; in particular the bleached pictures of the idyllic bourgeois summer house recall *Wild Strawberries* (1957). *Vigour*, which won the jury prize, also falls within the tradition of the style-conscious post-war European art cinema. It is intense and harrowing, as the film concentrates on a bleak Dutch farming community, and relentlessly evokes and portrays death, including the gruesome end of its heroine. It is, however, a pleasurable aesthetic experience, as the joyless existence of the farm is visually bathed in a beautiful 'winter afternoon' type of lighting, together with a movingly realistic mise-en-scene and ensemble performances (there are also some humorous moments). The stylistic preoccupations and 'universal' thematics of *The Guardian Angel* and *Vigour*, however, do not erase a recognizably female perspective, detectable, for instance, in Osten's film, in the matter-of-fact depiction of the mother's active sexuality. *Vigour*'s heroine, Rose, is a photographer from Amsterdam who joins a farmer at his home, after meeting him at an agricultural fair. Bert is recently widowed and has a young son, the possibilities that Rose's arrival bring are never grasped by Bert or the small community; conversely, Rose's expectations of a fresh beginning are soon dashed by the realization that a place has already been carved out for her, that of the 'new mother', a mere replacement for Bert's dead wife. It is, partly, the realization of stifling gender roles that brings about her grim ending.¹

Steal America belongs to the hip American independent filmmaking of Jim Jarmusch and Spike Lee. It is a cheaply made,

¹ Thanks to Jan Roldanus for sharing his views on *Vigour*.

16mm black-and-white, 'fun' road movie, that follows the fate of four young characters. Three of them are Europeans pursuing their film-shaped idea of the American dream in San Francisco and on the road; the fourth is a struggling American artist. The story is far removed from explicit feminist concerns, and the film in any case is more interested in depicting fleeting moments, vignettes and the characters' wanderings, than in a tight cause-and-effect narrative. It is noticeable, however, that the story, which begins, as befits the genre, with a young (French) man and his interest in women, gradually shifts and recentres around one woman – Stella – and her relationship to her friend Maria. The narrative resolution involves Stella realizing her ambition to go to Japan on a work contract as cabaret artiste, rather than following her boyfriend to New York – in fact it is intimated that *he* might follow her to Japan. What links all three films discussed above, beyond their deliberate reworkings of an acknowledged mode of filmmaking or genre, is their plurality of address. Several discourses are woven into them, among them feminism, but the latter is not necessarily the dominant one. Nowhere is this more explicit than in Patricia Rozema's *The White Room* (Canada, 1990), a postmodern reworking of the theme of voyeurism, with elements of fairy tales (not to mention Hitchcock). Madelaine X, a popular singer, is murdered while the hero, Norm, is watching helplessly. He finds out that another woman, Jane, may be the voice behind Madelaine X; the film then takes the form of an investigation, of Madelaine X, but also of identity. As Rozema put it when asked about the image of the white room, that which contains the ultimate mystery of Jane/Madelaine, 'some would argue that this is a particularly feminine image, I don't know'.



White Room
(Courtesy of Alliance Releasing)

What the films above also had in common was that they were quite controversially received by many women. They were found too ambiguous, too 'arty', too pessimistic, or too superficial; they did not explicitly privilege a woman's discourse or an address to women, nor did they tell a clear story of feminist celebration or alternative lifestyle – hence the criticism of the lack of lesbians' films. If the public's prize is any gauge of what the Créteil audience 'wants', the winner, Cynthia Scott's *The Company of Strangers* (Canada, 1990), provides just that. A group of older women is stranded in a remote mountain area, and they only have themselves and their wits to rely on in order to survive. Though classical in its style and narrative structure, it is an alternative tale in several ways: it is about older women, about women's strength and support, about women's desire, and at one point lesbianism is valorized as a positive sexual identity. The success of this film, as well as the popular reception of the very funny Italian comedy *Maitilda* (1990, Antonietta de Lillo and Giorgio Magliulo) points to a gap between what is felt by some filmmakers and critics to be the need to go beyond celebratory women's stories, and the desire on the part of the audience to see them. *Maitilda* is also a genre reworking, that of *commedia all'italiana*, but with a clear feminist twist, neatly deflecting traditional notions of the *femme fatale*.

Looking back at the beginnings of the festival, Jackie Buet deplored in a recent interview that 'the audience turned out to be primarily female. The women's aspect is the only one which worked straight away, and the film side was almost forgotten. This is exactly what we did not want, since right from the start our project was to promote the *cinema* made by women filmmakers. We did not want to be stuck in a women's thematics.' While the playing down of the 'women's thematics' is understandable in the French context (particularly in terms of fund-raising and media coverage), as I have argued in previous reports on the festival,² it can also be seen as one of the weaknesses of the festival (admittedly, I have only examined features; in the documentaries and short films, the emphasis was clearly on women's issues), and a failure to address its primary audience.

The '*Enthousiasmes et découvertes*' (Enthusiasms and discoveries) section this year was devoted to Marie Epstein (born 1899), a classic example of a woman filmmaker in need of critical recognition.³ Epstein suffered the fate of women who work in close partnership with men (in her case first her brother Jean Epstein, and then Jean Benoit-Lévy): credit goes to the men. Jean Benoit-Lévy, with whom she codirected and coscripted seven features in the 1930s, confined her to one footnote in his book *Les Grandes missions du cinéma* (L. Parizeau, 1945), a work written entirely in the first person singular. Film historians have followed suit and Marie Epstein herself has, unsurprisingly, adopted an ambiguous perspective on

2 See Ginette Vincendeau, 'Women as auteur-e-s – notes from Créteil', *Screen*, vol. 27 nos 3–4 (1986), pp. 156–64, 'Women's cinema, film theory and feminism in France', *Screen*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1987), pp. 4–19, 'Créteil 1988 – ten years on', *Screen*, vol. 29, no. 4 (1988), pp. 128–32, 'The 12th Créteil International Women's Film Festival', *Screen*, vol. 31 no. 3 (1990), pp. 323–7.

3 See Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *To Desire Differently: Feminism and the French Cinema* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1990) and Ginette Vincendeau 'Melodramatic realism on some French women's films of the 1930s', *Screen*, vol. 30 no. 3 (1989), pp. 51–65.

her own achievements. While she censured my piece in the Créteil catalogue where I was pointing out Benoit-Lévy's erasure of her contribution, she was happy to be quoted on the fact that she collaborated with him at all levels of the conception and making of the films, something that was confirmed at Créteil by Benoit-Lévy's daughters (he died in 1959).



Marie Epstein (Courtesy of the
Collection privée de Marie
Epstein)

The interesting aspect of Epstein's work is that, like her contemporary in Hollywood Dorothy Arzner, she worked in the mainstream (French) genres of her time, but was able to inflect the material in ways which suggest a feminine, and at times feminist, perspective. Epstein and Benoit-Lévy's films all combine social realism with melodramatic narratives, as seen in the two crowning glories of their career, *Peau de pêche* (1929) and *La Maternelle* (1933). Both locate their characters in the deprived Parisian

proletariat and both, in line with Benoit-Lévy's educational work, are concerned with ways of improving their lot, through working on the land in *Peau de pêche* and in a state school in *La Maternelle*. While Epstein shared Benoit-Lévy's position on social improvement, her extra input may be located, thematically, in the central place occupied by mother figures in their films. This is unusual enough in French cinema, but the films go further in considering motherhood and female authority figures as not necessarily tied to the biological. *La Maternelle*, *La Mort du Cygne* (1937) and *Le Feu de paille* (1939) are all narratively organized around the relationship between a child or adolescent (usually a girl) and several mother figures: biological mothers, teachers, ballet dancers, film stars. *Le Feu de paille*, a very rarely shown film, is the story of a modest Parisian family whose young son becomes an overnight (though short lived) film sensation. Ostensibly the narrative centres on the boy's relationship to his father, himself a failed stage actor. But soon the focus shifts to the boy and his two 'mothers', the biological one (Orane Demazis) and his glamorous costar. Besides exploring the question of 'What is a mother?', Epstein creates, through editing and framing, a space for the desiring gaze of women characters and that of young girls.⁴ Though Marie Epstein, out of modesty, did not come to Créteil, her films were a real discovery, even for a French audience. They showed that a woman could work in the mainstream French film industry of the 1930s and make her mark, as long as she accepted the semi-anonymity implied in working with a male colleague.

Créteil is too large an event to be exhaustively covered; there were one hundred individual films presented over eight days and a string of special sections. Apart from Marie Epstein, and the Asian films discussed by Bérénice Reynaud below, the two major sections were British animation and a tribute to Géraldine Chaplin. The excellent selection of animation films prepared by Irene Kotlarz (many of which have been shown in this country, including on television) and the complete retrospective of Alison de Vere's works were very successful and representative of the diversity but also of the specificity of an area which British women are increasingly making their own. The Géraldine Chaplin section, though by no means uninteresting, was an indication that Créteil's policy of requiring the star's presence for the tribute to take place, is becoming increasingly limiting. One can think of many female stars who, given the appropriate critical framework, would provide scope for more fruitful discussion. This may yet happen, and the plan for conferences to run parallel to the festival in 1992 (on the theme of women and Europe) and 1993 (on feminist film theory) indicates that the recurrent criticism of the lack of theoretical debate at Créteil might finally be tackled.

4 See Sandy Flitterman Lewis's analysis of *La Maternelle* in *To Desire Differently*.

Bérénice Reynaud

'Regards d'Orient Extrême' was a very romantic and exotic title for the Festival's Asian section. Its main course was to have been a tribute to the People's Republic of China's first woman filmmaker, Wang Ping (who recently died at seventy-four), but at the last minute China Film refused to ship her films to Paris. Conversely, a 'banned' film mysteriously found its way to France – Bao Zhifang's *Golden Fingernails* (1989), whose corny mixture of soap-operatic dialogues and Chinese urban culture baffled everybody. The film's main interest is to show a woman finding happiness against all Confucian orthodoxy when her married lover can finally divorce his wife – but when a 'career woman' collapses in front of a television crew and confesses that her ambition and bitchiness are only due to the fact that she is 'ugly' and that no man wants her, feminist audiences are clearly uneasy. By and large, the kind of 'women's cinema' China Film is trying to promote and export is very predictable, conventional and academic. Let's not forget that, after the slumbering years of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese cinema came alive again only through the efforts of the 'Fifth Generation' (the 'class of '82' of the Beijing Film Academy), and, so far, only one female director has emerged from their ranks, Peng Xiaoling (whose superb *Three Women* [1987] was shown at the Festival last year). A 'Sixth Generation', younger, more urban-oriented, is about to hatch, and new women directors might have something to say about male-female relationships, the social role played by women, and so on, in a post-Tiananmen-Square China. But if the works of Wang Junzheng, Wu'er Shana, Wang Haowei or Shi Shujun screened at Créteil proved that they are as competent and skilled as their male colleagues, they also made us realize that the directors of the 'Fifth Generation' (Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, Tian Zhuangzhuang and so on) have created higher expectations about Chinese cinema in western audiences.

From Hong Kong, a mini-retrospective of Ann Hui's work (three films, the distributors having made the others unavailable) made the audience hungry to see more of the work of one of the most intelligent, professional and sensitive Asian directors working today. Her first film, *The Secret* (1979, starring Sylvia Chang), is a harrowing descent into the hell of female jealousy, under the deceiving appearances of a ghost story set in modern Hong Kong. The two-part kung-fu epic-cum-love story, *The Romance of Book and Sword* (1987), with warriors hurtling through the air, sandstorms, ghost cities and spectacular landscapes shot in mainland China, already shown a few years ago, was a hit again, and found a French distributor. *Song of Exile* (1990) is a semi-autobiographical

account of the difficult relationship between a London-educated Hong Kong woman and her Japanese mother. Actress/producer/director Sylvia Chang was represented by her second feature, *Passion* (1986), the elegant tale of a friendship between two women that survives the fact that they are romantically involved with the same man. Another film by a Hong Kong filmmaker, Cheung Yeung-ting's *Eight Tales of Gold* (1990, also with Sylvia Chang), movingly narrates a New York cabbie's impossible return to his native Chinese village, left sixteen years ago. Also shot in mainland China (via a Hong Kong company), *The Twin Bracelets* (1990) by Huang Yu Shan (one of the rare women to work in the Taiwanese film industry), by showing the closeness of childhood friends separated by arranged marriages, raises the difficult and fascinating question of female homosexuality in Chinese culture. The section also paid homage to Shu Shen's *China Behind*, shot in 1974, about four young people escaping from the Cultural Revolution. The film was banned for years, which prematurely ended the career of the director (now retired in Los Angeles), one of the first women to work in the Hong Kong and Taiwan film industries.

In Japan, it seems that the easiest way for a woman to become a director is to be an actress and make friends with film technicians who will agree to work with her. The most successful is Kurisaki Midori, who tackled the aesthetic challenge of putting a Bunraku play to the screen. In her *Double Suicide in Sonekaki* (1981, a classic play about the tragic romance between a young clerk and a loving courtesan), Bunraku puppets and their black-clad handlers (three per puppet) gracefully move in real decors, unsettling viewers' expectations through a breathtaking interplay between 'reality' and artificiality, feelings and their representation. From Vietnam, the long-banned, mutilated, re-edited *Travelling Circus* (1988) by Viet Linh still kept its impact as a fable about political illusions in a society devastated by poverty.

In total, the section included twenty-two films (two in competition). Because of limited funding this year, the Créteil organizers could not include work from other Asian countries (although the hauntingly beautiful *Sau* [1989], by Indian actress/director Aparna Sen was shown in competition), nor from the Asian diaspora in North America and Australia (except for *Chunaman's Choice* [1987] by Lori Tsang, a former student of Haile Gerima at Howard University). After some political turmoil in the last two years when the 'Images of/by Black Women' section and the Latin-American section were presented as a side-bar to the Festival, the films of the Asian section were shown in the main venue, the Maison des Arts.

New maps

The theme of multiculturalism at this year's Society for Cinema Studies Conference drew a healthy variety of responses. Such diversity seems to indicate a number of things, not the least of which is that if each year's conference is going to revolve around a topic or issue, then the organizers need to programme an opening plenary address to provide participants with a context, a range of definitions, and a set of problems which they can carry into the smaller discussions.

Some passion surfaced during this year's plenary session (at the end of day two). William Rothman was 'appalled' by the 'political terrorism' of organizing the meeting around the idea of multiculturalism, a decision which thereby slighted other subjects of interest, and he characterized participants' accommodation to the theme as 'complacent' and 'fearful'. Others argued that the term is vague and went undefined, to which Manthia Diawara answered that Robert Stam had, in fact, eloquently defined multiculturalism and its implications for cinema and cultural studies (more on this below). In practice, many conference participants simply ignored sessions devoted to multiculturalism, and attended panels on psychoanalysis, audience studies, film and broadcasting industries, history and popular memory, the avant garde, historiography and pornography. Panels that might be regarded as part of the dialogue on multiculturalism – for example, Latin American Cinema, Asian Cinemas, Gay and Lesbian Theory and Cinema, Ethnicities in American Cinema, and Cross-cultural Documentary Filmmaking – attracted only dedicated audiences.

Robert Stam's paper, entitled 'Eurocentrism, multiculturalism, and cinema studies', called for deprovincializing cinema studies not just as some sort of gift to the

subaltern, but in order to make an epistemological advance, as a gesture toward historical lucidity. In Stam's definition, multiculturalism is inseparable from a critique of Eurocentrism. 'Multiculturalism without anti-Eurocentrism is merely accretive – a shopping-mall *summa* of the world's cultural boutiques; while the critique of Eurocentrism without multiculturalism runs the risk of simply inverting existing hierarchies rather than profoundly unsettling them.'

Stam accused cinema studies of a provincialism arising from the ethnocentrically grounded failure to envision a global 'remapping' of the field or to develop a fundamentally transnational discourse, and from the failure to link its critique of present-day representations to the longer history of colonialist discourses. 'The colonialist repressed is always susceptible of making sudden returns, as in the Gulf War where venerable stereotypes (the irrational East) and outmoded paradigms (the Christian crusade against Islam) were subliminally resurrected by the media.'

Stam offered concrete suggestions for remapping cinema studies curricula, advocating, for example, a shuttling between films that express Hollywood-centrist visions of world history and politics and alternative or indigenous visions. A course tracing the impact on the cinema of the 'expressive culture of the black diaspora', for instance, would include African-American directors like Spike Lee, Charles Burnett and Julie Dash; Caribbean directors like Sarah Maldoror and Euzhan Palcy; Brazilian directors like Zozimo Balbul and Antonio Pitanga; British directors like Isaac Julien, and African directors like Sembene and Cisse. Similarly, what might a course offered during 1992, on the occasion of the quincentennial commemoration of Columbus's 'encounter' with the 'New World', accomplish in screening not Eurocentric movies about the heroic

conquest of the Americas, but Latin American third cinema and such indigenous visions as those by and about the Kayapo indians of Brazil? Shown with or without John Boorman's earnestly liberal *Emerald Forest* (1985), such programming could begin to enact a process of mutual and reciprocal relativization of cultures, a useful defamiliarization for our students and ourselves.

In the same session with Stam came presentations by Andrew Ross, James Naremore, and Ella Shohat. Shohat raised the problem of representation that is inextricably bound up with talk of multiculturalism – the tension between poststructuralist theory, which contests any originary notion of correspondence between the real and its representation, or between the subject and its textual productions, and the activist politics of identity, so crucial for marginalized communities just discovering the importance of 'speaking for oneself'. 'Can we grant the force of the poststructuralist critique of the unitary subject, while still recognizing the need for marginalized communities to become subjects of history?' On whom does the burden of representation fall? Shohat called for an understanding of cultural identity as constituted not of fixed, natural differences but of a changing set of historically diverse experiences. She emphasized the differences between *speaking for* (a politically dangerous proposition), *speaking up for* (that is, speaking on behalf of a group when that group is blocked from representation), and finally, *speaking alongside* – forming coalitions and alliances, sharing the burden of representation.

The politics of who may speak for whom, and about what, were central to two productive workshops on pedagogy: 'Classroom Dynamics and Multiculturalism' and 'Lesbian/Gay Instructors, Curriculum and Issues of Pedagogy'. While the former was disappointingly xenophobic in its

assumptions about multicultural teaching – chiefly concerned as it was with encouraging dialogue and struggle among marginalized subcultures in US schools, and not with raising awareness of radical otherness on a more global scale – it nevertheless presented diverse perspectives and practical pedagogical suggestions. The gay/lesbian teaching workshop turned the tables in posing the problem of the 'subaltern' as teacher. Will the teacher's coming out help to defamiliarize heterosexism and create anchors of identification for gay and lesbian students, or does it merely have the effect of alienating most students and ghettoizing gay/lesbian instructors? Do universities sincerely favour multicultural learning, or do they disfavour teachers who take difference seriously, who are different?

Finally, I should mention what for me crystallized both the strengths and weaknesses of the 1991 SCS meeting. I attended two panels on Chinese cinema and the multicultural history of Chinese film studies. Caucasians, aside from some of the American film scholars who lectured in China between 1984 and 1988, were scarce at these sessions. In different presentations, Chen Mei and Chen Xi-He outlined the history of the cross-fertilization of western and Chinese film study (with most seeds blowing from the West to China): the exciting 'modernity' of Kracauer and Bazin in the late 1970s when post-Cultural Revolution China opened up to outside ideas, and the subsequent revolutionary importation of semiotics, psychoanalysis, and, yes, Marxism, in the 1980s. Elucidating to what extent, and in what manner, Chinese academics embraced particular western theories, these presentations shed light on both East and West. Jenny Lau and Yingjin Zhang pointed out the interpretive dangers of adopting western critical paradigms in Chinese film studies; the latter's talk singled out a psychoanalytic reading of an early Chinese film that was led astray by a discourse ill-

suited to the recognition of profound cultural differences. Perpetuated not necessarily by ourselves as individuals, but by institutions and discourses, colonialism is at work, relatively indifferent to history and to culture. There is no way for nonwestern texts to speak back to a powerful theoretical discourse: but scholars must be willing to negotiate the distances. As one participant put it, we must be able to hail the potential of dialogue and polyphony in a more truly crosscultural criticism

Claudia Gorbman

Multicultural perimeters

The Society for Cinema Studies Conference in Los Angeles began with a tour of historic early film sites. Obviously designed to take advantage of the conference location in 'cinema city', the tour also inadvertently provided a frame for the ensuing conference on multiculturalism. As interested academic tourists climbed on the bus, our guide handed us a thirty-page xerox packet of photos with an occasional map or diagram to supplement, contextualize, and, in some instances, override or replace the visual evidence we would see from the bus. Thus some of the early film sites we visited were constructed by imposing the image in a xeroxed photograph (of Mack Sennett's studios, for example) onto a vacant lot or a storage facility. Not only did this dramatize the particularly mercurial topography of Los Angeles, it also concretized the interactions between history, memory, documentation and spectatorship vital to considerations of multiculturalism and cinema. As we conjured early film 'sights' from xeroxes in our laps and imposed one history on the areas we toured, we overrode the evidence of other histories perhaps more relevant to the conference theme. If Los Angeles is the quintessential postmodern city, it is also,

especially given immigration patterns over the last decade or so, a profoundly multicultural city. Often there were no white faces in the crowds outside the bus window, yet the history we found, the history we toured, was an exclusively white history. Issues concerning the shifting social geography of this city and its significance to the film industry and film history received only one passing reference. Driving off the campus of the University of Southern California (USC), where the conference was held, and into the neighbouring area, the guide explained that some of the first film companies, among them D. W. Griffith's, were located there. Indicating one well preserved mansion now inhabited and maintained by a small private college, he remarked drily, 'This area used to be the most elegant in Los Angeles – now it's North Watts.'

The situation of this small campus replicates, in miniature, the situation of the University of Southern California itself, an expensive private college whose superb cinema and television facilities have been funded by the gargantuan profits of some of the film school's prolific former students. USC is also proximate to Watts, a fact that occasioned various warnings to conferees about staying within the campus perimeters and observing other security measures. The location of USC, its affiliation with the wealth and power of the film industry, and its alien status with regard to the culture immediately surrounding it, highlight the power and privilege of the academy, and exemplify with particular acuity the problems facing film and cultural studies scholars interested in breaching the perimeters of monocultural research. Mainstream 'classical' films and the industry that produced them constitute a certain kind of cultural memory, a cultural history characterized by the systematic exclusion or marginalization of groups whose race, gender, class or sexual preference deviated from a white, middle-

suited to the recognition of profound cultural differences. Perpetuated not necessarily by ourselves as individuals, but by institutions and discourses, colonialism is at work, relatively indifferent to history and to culture. There is no way for nonwestern texts to speak back to a powerful theoretical discourse: but scholars must be willing to negotiate the distances. As one participant put it, we must be able to hail the potential of dialogue and polyphony in a more truly crosscultural criticism

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class, heterosexual, male norm. How can this cultural history be amended and enhanced by others' memories and histories, especially when these others have largely been excluded both from the films themselves and historical documentation about these films?

Furthermore, how does the multicultural scholar see, speak of, make sense of the discourses of others without assuming the role of the expert or the fascinated tourist, without imposing the flawed authority of exclusionary theories or documentation? The best papers that I heard at SCS addressed these questions in diverse and illuminating ways.

Papers and visual presentations concerning memory, history, documentation and spectatorship (or some combination thereof) as they relate to multiculturalism performed different tasks. Some, like Dan Streible's 'Defending the race: black film culture before "The Dirt of the Nation"', Thomas Waugh's 'Imagining an audience: gay male pornographic film and photography, 1920–1940', and Chris Holmlund's 'Bring on a little danger: girls and travel in Swedish children's films' supplemented conventional accounts of film spectatorship and history with extensive research concerning other film histories and spectators. Other papers and presentations considered how films themselves could articulate a multicultural perspective. Robert Stam, in a paper entitled 'The multicultural film text', suggested a pedagogical tactic for deprovincializing film studies and demonstrating the limited cultural perspective of mainstream films – use the structure of the double feature to juxtapose a film like *Out of Africa* (1985) with an anti-colonialist film; show *Girl Crazy* (1943) with Julie Dash's *Illusions* (1983), and so on. The next day, in a programme curated by Women Make Movies, I saw a film entitled *History and Memory* (1991) by Rea Tajiri (about the 'relocation' of Japanese-American citizens to internment camps during World War II) that implemented this tactic. Constructed from

segments of government documentaries and Hollywood films made at the time and counterpointed with the filmmaker's contemporary video footage that attempted to reconstruct and record her grandmother's memory of the camps, the film effectively illustrated the role media has played and, more positively, can play, in both representing and correcting monocultural historical accounts.

Taking a more critical approach, Andrew Ross exposed the limitations of scientific documentation in a paper about ecology, maps and 'cartographic imperialism' entitled 'The ecology of global images', while two excellent papers illustrated alternative approaches to individual films, emphasizing cultural history and personal memory respectively. James Naremore's piece, 'Uptown folk. Africanism and *Cabin in the Sky*', constructed a multicultural context for this 1943 film by delimiting the richly complex and contradictory discourses from which it derived. Annette Kuhn investigated another type of excluded other, the personal self, examining the role of memories, emotion and autobiography in film interpretation in her paper 'Mandy and possibility'.

Another group of papers and presentations dealt with various multicultural encounters constructed in or with visual media. One panel, on 'Cinematic Constructions of the Female Traveler', considered race and gender issues in travel narratives: Gina Marchetti found that Hollywood used the figure of the geisha to reinforce norms of proper femininity in wayward western women while Caren Kaplan explored the relationship between nineteenth-century feminist and imperialist discourses. Chris Straayer, in a reading of *Virgin Machine* (Monika Trent, 1988), examined how the film incorporated lesbian pornography and romance discourses. Other papers and panels looked at multicultural film and video production. Alexandra Juhasz presented video footage

produced by women in the AIDS culture, pointing out how the video's production and consumption generated a localized identity politics. Adam Knee considered the range and function of AIDS activist video work and the various types of intervention it has accomplished. David Lugowski and Danae Clark both articulated the challenges to psychoanalytic film theory posed by gay and lesbian criticism

Finally, Ella Shohat, in 'Can the nonsubaltern speak?: cinema studies, multiculturalism, and questions of representation', discussed different aspects of the role of the multicultural critic with humour and insight, cogently identifying a range of problems and contradictions besetting the well intended nonsubaltern. Ultimately she called for the exploration of new modes of speech and the articulation of communal coalitions that would obviate the mono/multicultural opposition and alleviate the need, in some discursive future, for secured cultural perimeters. Despite one or two dissenting voices at the plenary session who felt that the multicultural theme limited the diversity of the conference, the general feeling expressed was that the spirit of the conference this year had taken important steps in that direction.

Kathleen McHugh

Spot the Difference, London, 14 March 1991

This was a high profile event, held at Broadcasting House, with influential and famous people scattered liberally through the audience as well as present on the speakers' platform. It was free, well publicized, and backed by resources that could have funded a hundred academic conferences. It was meant as evidence of the BBC's commitment to equal opportunities, and they had stumped up the money to prove it. It was also good fun. Not for the industry the endless

sequence of badly delivered monologues that characterize so many academic conferences. These people were in the business of communication and it showed. It took money, of course, for the two specially commissioned films and the written information packs for two hundred and fifty delegates. And they had the talent: the conference opened with Sheila Hancock reading extracts from the British Film Institute's *One Day in the Life of Television* diaries, and towards the end of the day Sandy Toksvig (*Whose Line is it Anyway*) provided a very funny satirical summary of the day's events.

There were a few hiccups: the embarrassed note from Granada TV, following complaints from the floor, explaining the presence of the male television crew filming the event for a forthcoming series on women and work; it seems that all the female technicians were busy elsewhere. The choice of Raymond Snoddy (*Financial Times*) to chair one of the discussion sessions merely served to highlight men's tendency to not listen to women; he kept inviting the few high-ranking male members of the audience to air their views – to the point at which vociferous jeering and heckling broke out amongst the women. It got the adrenalin going though, helped by Anna Ford's impassioned intervention claiming that despite all the stated good intentions nothing had really changed for women in television because the men hadn't changed. It certainly became apparent during the day that News and Current Affairs was an area of programming resistant to women's full participation. As one delegate asked ITN newscaster Jon Snow: 'How can you bear, every night, to turn to Zeinab Badawi and say "and now for the rest of the news".'

I may be giving the impression that this was a lightweight affair; but this is not so. The conference raised and debated a range of important issues in a constructive and serious manner, issues which have been at the centre of feminist film and television

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studies for many years. What is the current position of women in the television industry? What initiatives have been taken towards greater equality? What obstacles stand in the way of achieving these goals? Do women have a distinctive contribution to make in television production? Would an increase in the numbers of women in the workforce have an effect on programme content? Are women as an audience adequately catered for?

A research project was specially commissioned for the conference. The research was conducted by two City University sociologists, Professor Angela Coyle, who has done work on equal opportunities at Central TV; and Reena Bhavnani. Their research was designed to discover whether women do have a distinctive and different contribution to make to television production; and, if so, why it remains so invisible. To supplement the written report, a film was made to show the team in action and to pinpoint the main findings of the research.

Crimewatch was chosen because it has a woman producer and a largely female production team. The research findings emphasized the 'woman friendly' space created by the producer. She had an approach to management that differed significantly from the prevailing norms in the BBC. The most significant change that she made was to structure the work of the team to make it regular and highly structured, so that if time away from home was needed it was planned well in advance. Hours spent at work were reduced to a normal and predictable level. She took an open participative approach to team meetings; everyone felt their contributions were valued. She adopted a developmental approach to people management, providing career advice and opportunities for staff to develop new skills (one of the directors was originally a production assistant).

So why aren't these styles of management more widespread in the BBC? Coyle and

Bhavnani argue that it is not because women are intrinsically more cooperative, democratic and caring in their attitudes, but because they have more to gain from finding alternatives to current management norms. Methods of working have evolved in order to fit into the pattern of men's lives. The long, unpredictable hours, the requirement to be highly visible and 'bullshit' your way into promotion, the 'clubby' atmosphere built around after-hours socializing: all these aspects of the organization's culture require a person with few responsibilities outside work. Also, women have to find ways to lead in a situation of relative powerlessness. Women continue to be judged as women first and professionals second, thus forcing them to prove themselves in ways that men do not. They do not have the same right to authority that men have.

It is the need for a shift in occupational culture that is the long-term agenda for equal opportunities. The short-term agenda, now an accepted goal at the BBC, is reform within the existing structure, ensuring that more women and other underrepresented groups are given jobs. John Birt (Deputy Director General, BBC) announced at the start of the conference that the BBC now has targets for the proportion of women at every level of the organization (for example, five years ago women formed only five per cent in the top grade; the figure is now ten per cent, and the target is thirty per cent by 1996).

This wasn't just a BBC event. It included speakers and delegates from every part of the industry. One of the recurring issues was whether the current changes affecting the commercial companies (the franchise system, the twenty-five per cent quota for independent commissions) was an opportunity or a threat to women in the industry. Carol Haslam (Independent Programme Producers Association) (IPPA) gave a rosy picture of the independent sector providing a space for women: in small

companies they are just as likely as men to be in management positions, she said, and cultures are being formed that provide for more flexibility in balancing work and domestic commitments. This view did not, however, match with everyone's experience, and when David Elstein (Director of Programmes, Thames TV) suggested that if women didn't like the culture of the large organizations they could always set up their own companies, the audience justifiably bristled.

The trend towards short-term contracts and commissions means the relinquishment of hard-won maternity rights and an increase in the unpredictability which women with children find so difficult. It is also significant that the people with the power to commission from the independents are almost exclusively men: out of a list of 132 names distributed by IPPA only thirteen are women. Contract compliance as a way to guarantee equal opportunities in the independent sector has yet to receive any substantial support from the top. The increase in access provided by the independent sector can be seen as merely another opportunity for staff to be exploited, and it is disproportionately women who will suffer while men hang on to the secure and powerful jobs within the commissioning organizations.

And hang on they will. Janet Street-Porter (Head of Youth Programmes, BBC) provocatively called for sackings at the top to let women in (she made it clear that she would be quite happy to be the next Director General). This suggestion was met with a calm rebuff from Jonathan Powell (Controller, BBC1), who obviously regarded it as too uncivilized to contemplate. But as Liz Forgan (Director of Programmes, Channel Four) pointed out, in a time of staff reductions something radical has to be done to speed up the process of women's promotion. The hierarchical norms of waiting your turn were dispensed with by Jeremy

Isaacs at Channel Four: it is to his determination to find a woman to appoint that Liz owes her job.

But what about all those women at the bottom? How do they feel about their work? What special qualities do they bring to their tasks as secretaries, production assistants, vision mixers, researchers and general dogsbodies? Tana Wollen and Janet Willis from the BFI Television Projects Unit presented their impressions culled from reading the eight hundred diaries submitted by women (of the 2,300 received from people working in the industry) for the *One Day in the Life of Television* project set up in November 1988. These extracts highlighted the good humour with which many of these women contemplated the ironies of their situation. An astute awareness of their roles in the industry – 'When asked what I do for a living I usually answer "Count backwards a lot"'; 'I do everything that nobody else does' – is combined with an acceptance of their lot – 'I have deliberately chosen a less exalted . . . career as a researcher . . . to reduce potential conflict between my work and home life'. Amused detachment appears to be a common survival strategy to cope with the social relations within which they have to work. 'I offer to help carry the gear but Kevin says he's "balanced"' – a technical term for being overloaded but macho. Much of their time is spent on background tasks that gain no kudos but without which no programmes would be made. Nevertheless, they nearly all love their jobs and feel privileged to work in the industry. It is this dedication and enthusiasm that allows the industry to exploit and undervalue them. To some it is a kind of vocation.

But it is difficult to imagine that diaries written by the women attending the conference would have been so accepting of their situation. The audience was dominated by women who were already producers, writers, directors, editors: this was strictly for the high achievers, and they weren't about to

be fobbed off by bland reassurances from the men in power. The contrast crystallized for me the one significant absence from the day's discussion. No-one mentioned class, but it was obvious that it is as significant a division within the industry as gender; and if these women lacked power because of their gender, this was substantially compensated for by the privileges of class. They were hard-pressed, but nevertheless could afford the nannies that allowed them to continue to work; they felt marginalized, but to an outsider the qualities they exuded were of brimming self-confidence and a determination to succeed.

If women were to gain a more influential role in television production, would this make any difference to the programmes produced? It was assumed by the conference that it would, but the question was inadequately investigated and suffered from an absence of any explanatory framework for researching the determinants of programme forms. It was the point at which ignorance of work done in academic media and cultural studies was most apparent and most limiting.

The *Crimewatch* study was unable to find any evidence of the women having significantly affected the nature of the programme, the programme's format and agenda were already established, and remained dependent on priorities decided by the police – the emphasis on violent crimes against women, for example. The team were able to modify rather than transform the programme, for instance by ensuring that violence was not presented in a sensationalized way, or in one specific example, by deciding not to interview the distraught parents of a murder victim when a 'real journalist' would have had no such qualms. This latter incident led to much debate, in which women's claims to greater sensitivity to other people's feelings was the contentious issue.

This example highlights both the institutional force of generic conventions and

the extent to which television is dependent on outside institutions for its definitions of reality. Representational codes incorporate sexist assumptions. It is very difficult for women to challenge the accepted formats without being open to charges of amateurism and incompetence. Doing things differently takes more time and the chances of failure are much higher. Giving women a one-off chance to develop a new format for current affairs from a female perspective and then chopping it because it hasn't worked is one of the ways in which even Channel Four has evaded the issue. Helen Baehr (Polytechnic of Central London, and former member of Broadside, the company which experienced this fate) made the telling point that recognition of a distinctive feminist perspective in news and current affairs is a fundamental challenge to the ideology of impartiality and 'balance' upon which this genre depends for its legitimacy.

In order to examine the question of whether women are adequately catered for as an audience, the conference was presented with research carried out by the Broadcast Partnership. This was announced as the first television audience research ever undertaken in relation to gender – again underlining the alarming ignorance (or dismissal as unscientific) of academic research done within the media and cultural-studies traditions. This presentation was lamentably weak because of its reliance on ratings and appreciation statistics for men and women. These statistics showed that there are men's programmes which women do not watch in significant numbers (sport) and general programmes which both men and women watch and enjoy (soap operas, crime fiction), but that there are no programmes in peak viewing time that appeal to women and not to men. It appears therefore that women as a distinct viewing group are not at present catered for by peak-time television.

However, the quantitative nature of the data used made interpretation difficult, as

huge assumptions had to be made about why people were watching one programme rather than another. Is the fact that men watch soap operas indicative of women's greater control over programme selection? This was presented as a possible explanation by the speaker. Or is it that peak-time soaps are now designed to appeal to men as well as to women? Had the researchers known of the qualitative research undertaken by David Morley and others into the social relations of family viewing, it would have been made apparent that the latter is the more likely explanation. This conclusion is reinforced by Christine Geraghty's research, published in *Women and Soap Opera* (Polity, 1991), on the changing content of peak-time soaps over the past fifteen years.

I was left with the conviction that there needs to be a more concerted effort to bring together the dominant discourses of equal opportunities within the television industry with those of academic discourses on the media. Academics could usefully learn how to disseminate in a more accessible way the

results of our research, so that we don't remain cut off from the institutions which we study. The television industry, on the other hand, needs to acknowledge the important role of cultural-studies research in exploring the complex interrelationships which link producers and consumers through the mediation of programmes. The strength of television studies must lie in seeking explanatory theories to link these spheres of practice, so that prescriptions for breaking down patriarchal structures in television culture do not concentrate exclusively on a single sphere on the assumption that the problem will then be solved. The weakness of this conference was that it had no means to conceptualize the connections between production practices, programme forms and viewing pleasures; despite lip-service to the contrary, the overriding impression was of a group whose main concern was with its own opportunities for career advancement, rather than with more generalized cultural ideals.

Jane Arthurs

debates

Filmography

To start with a blunt point filmography is not in a good state. The theory is muddled and the information deficient. The state of filmography, in fact, is a bit like a teenager's bedroom. It hasn't had all that long to get into such a messy state – so unlike grandpa bibliography and grandma art history – but it's so messy that when you open the door onto it, you take one look and say 'Oh, my God' and shut the door again. Even some of the world's major film archives can't tell you what films they've got, in which version and in what condition. Meanwhile, in the outer world, prints circulate which are of different lengths, different gauges, with different credits, different soundtracks, or, in the case of silents, with different intertitles. Nobody seems to know why these prints are different and why or whether one version is to be preferred to another.

There is no reason to acquiesce in this state of affairs, inherited from the past. There is today a big film studies establishment – the industry is alert to the advantages of reissuing best possible editions from the back catalogue. And there are computers, which make the compilation, cross-indexing and exchange of information much easier.

One place to begin is in the archives. In the better resourced and more alert archives cataloguing has become a sophisticated practice. Many years ago the National Film Archive in London prepared and published a small volume under the modest title of *Rules For Use in the Cataloguing Department of the National Film Archive* (fifth edition, 1960). Although not exhaustive, it is a singularly precise and lucid little book. But it only deals with cataloguing films (that is copies) in a collection, not with the larger textual and

circulation history of a film and the relations between the versions or prints an archive holds and those it does not.

More recently the Library of Congress in Washington has elaborated the London rules, and this version forms the basis of a new international standard, now adopted by FIAF (Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film) and published under the title *The FIAF Cataloguing Rules for Film Archives* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1991). Worldwide acceptance of the new standard will facilitate comparison of versions held in different archives and it is also designed to enable data to be stored in machine-readable form.

But filmography is broader in scope than cataloguing, and there are many things which archives cannot do, and which scholars must do. Cataloguers still catalogue collections. Filmographers need to cast their net wider – to reconstruct the material, textual and circulation history of bodies of work whose components have survived a bit here, there and everywhere or perhaps not at all.

In what follows I shall be focusing on sectorial filmographies – the filmographies that one would hope to find included in an author monograph or a studio history. But I make the proviso that these are never entirely freestanding, and that material gathered for an auteur filmography – for a book or retrospective, say – should be: firstly, integrable into larger data bases (not necessarily those that exist at present, but the more sophisticated and flexible ones that – I hope – will replace them); secondly, intellectually usable outside an auteurist framework – auteur filmographies, for example, provide or should provide an excellent basic source of material for the history of censorship, where information on cuts demanded by censors at particular times or in particular places is clearly of great relevance.

To satisfy the first criterion we need to start with correct identification of every title. For the second criterion we above all need a

thorough historical account of the different versions in which a particular film has circulated

But this is precisely the information that one tends not to find in the things called 'Filmography' placed at the back of books. If you go to the back of my book on Visconti, for example, you will get the correct titles of films (which is not the case with every filmography) but you will not get clear or comprehensive information about the differences between the versions in which the films have circulated.

The model I shall now propose for an auteur filmography aims principally to remedy these defects in as systematic a way as possible.

I shall start with a rather shocking proposition. Filmography does not classify films at all. What it starts with is not a film but a work. This work may be an unmade film, a lost film, an extant film, a video, a film only released on video, or a video work transferred to celluloid. This entity – the work – which takes or has taken various forms, is then divided according to the versions in which it exists or has existed.

In proposing this I am taking a leaf out of the bibliographers' book, since bibliographers (despite their name) don't classify books; they too classify works, divided into their various manifestations or editions (most of which are books). I suggest that we start reshaping filmography by classifying according to the following four categories

Identification: Each work has a unique identification. For a book it is author and title. For a film or video work I suggest it should be title, country and a year (preferably the year of first copyright registration, if known). Director or production company should not be part of the identification.

Title. The film is identified by an internationally agreed title, which would

normally be the original release title in country of origin: *Tirez sur le pianiste*, not *Shoot the Pianoplayer*; *Bend of the River*, not the British release title *Where the River Bends*, *La caduta degli Dei*, not *Gottterdammerung* or *The Damned*. But titles are actually quite complicated, so we need to follow with a fuller specification: the primary title; maybe a literal translation of it; alternative titles under which the film might be known including release titles in the language of our filmography. Thus we would have *Lyubavni slučai ili tragedija službenice PTT* ('A love affair or the tragedy of a switchboard operator'), *Switchboard Operator*; *Lola Montès* (e-grave s), *Lola Montez* (e z), which is the German title of this Franco-German coproduction – not 'Lola Montés' (e-acute s), which is another film (or rather work) – but, yes, *The Sins of Lola Montes*, which is the English-language release title of the shortened version; and so on. It is as well to deal with the titles fully at this early stage, for ease of presentation and cross-referencing.

Most published filmographies at this point proceed with cast and credits, gauge, length, release date and so on. I propose, however, that we divide our remaining information into two. Firstly, invariant information, that is to say information that is true of all versions of the work. Basically this is going to be production information. This is the trunk of our information tree. We then follow with the branches: variant information, or information about particular versions of the work; and then the twigs – information that is copy-specific, and deals with examples of the various versions in the form of copies that the filmographer or some previous trustworthy person has examined.

Invariant information: Here we put most credit information. Most credits are contractual and very little information of this kind is variant. (There will be space later to

say that Peter Ustinov dubbed the voice over for the English version of *Le Plaisir* and Anton Walbrook the German.) Here we could also say what gauge the film (if a film) was shot on, whether it is anamorphic or not, and we could also note the colour process. We do not put a length, since length is not a property of a work but only of versions of a work.

Variant information: The important thing here is to establish what version of the film is to be considered primary. A sort of first edition, as it were, except that it need not be the first. It need not be the biggest, nor the one we or other people think the best. Many films are previewed in an unfinished state, and recut for release. As a general, but not infallible rule, I would favour treating as primary the first big city release in country of origin, its length in metres or feet, gauge and aspect ratio. The reason for doing this is, on the one hand, that from then on it is mostly downhill and, on the other hand, that superior versions, or versions that one might want to count as superior, often have a very ambiguous status. The reputed 140 minute version of *Lola Montès*, for example, not only no longer exists but was probably never shown outside the cutting room. Sometimes, too, films are recreated in supposedly original versions only later – *Fantasia*, for example, was released in mono but can now be seen in stereo, as was Disney's original intention. It seems to me best to start with an attested version, but admit the possibility not only of parallel versions (the German *Lola Montez* alongside the French) but of up-versions (that is bigger and better) as well as down-versions (the ones that get shorter and worse when put onto 16mm or video).

Under the versions head, as well as under invariant information, one needs to include gauge and aspect ratio, which may differ from the shooting gauge and aspect. *Blade Runner*, for example, was shot on 35mm but released in 70mm, against the director's

wishes. Rossellini's *Viva l'Italia* was shot partly academy and partly hardgate 1.66:1, but clearly designed to be shown 1.66 on release. Derek Jarman's *Sebastiane* was mistakenly shown on television in TV's approximation of academy, although it was shown theatrically in widescreen. As a result TV viewers were shocked to see a penis at the bottom of the frame, which caused a quite unnecessary scandal since the said organ was never meant to appear on the screen.

Variant information can go on being accumulated for ever. Here, what you put in depends partly on who you are, or where you are. If you are a filmographer in Hong Kong you will want to include information on Cantonese versions of American movies, but I hope I shan't be accused of Eurocentrism if I say that this information probably does not need to be included in filmographies made in London or LA. But dubbing and even subtitling can be important. Any filmography of Samuel Fuller should include the fact that the French release version of *Pickup on South Street* was retitled *Le Port de la drogue* and that the dialogue was changed in the dubbing to turn its anticommunist spy story into a tale of international drug running. Mizoguchi's *Shun-heike monogatari* is pretty incomprehensible if you don't understand Japanese and rely on the subtitles on the 16mm print. If you watch it on TV in Britain, however, it is literally a different story since the subtitling has been done afresh by someone who appears to know something about medieval Japan. It is also important to note that many European films, at least as far back as *Stromboli, terra di Dio* in 1949, have original English language soundtracks, and the native language version is the dubbed one.

I could go on for ever, but I won't. I shall just say in conclusion that I know the model I am proposing is not entirely foolproof. I can think of objections, I can think of cases

of films the model does not accommodate (*Intolerance*, for example) But I do think the method I am proposing is a step in the right direction

One particular objection is that it does seem rather over-elaborate, when so many films simply do not have the problems I have enumerated in the cases of Ophuls or Rossellini My answer here is that this is necessary work. Anyone who spends a year researching a director, must study the textual history of the films, and must be prepared to share the information on that textual history.

Try preparing a retrospective of the work of Luchino Visconti with no better guide than the filmography contained at the back of the book *Visconti*, Cinema One series, Secker & Warburg and Viking Press, 1973, author G Nowell-Smith It can't be done I've tried. And as a result of trying I promise a better filmography in the next edition

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith

This article is a slightly abbreviated version of a paper delivered to the Society for Cinema Studies Conference at the University of Southern California Los Angeles, May 1991

Letter to the Editors of *Screen*

I write to point out several errors of fact in Barry King's 'Symptomatically yours', his report on the May 1990 Society for Cinema Studies Conference (*Screen*, vol. 31, no. 4 [1990], pp. 435–6). Although I did not attend the conference, I find myself the target of an attack in the opening page of King's piece:

Both Noel Carroll and David Bordwell, rather like latter day Daniel Bells, have launched strong arguments that support a call for the end of ideology in cinema and film studies. Certainly Bordwell, in the *Chronicle* article, manages to suggest that the study of films as "'symptomatic" of a period or a culture' is antithetical to sound research. For Bordwell, it seems, an ideological approach has a necessary kinship with fox-hunting: it is where the unmanageable can be seen chasing the imponderable. (p. 435)

King refers to an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in which the writer characterizes developments in the field as a return to empirical history after a period of interest in theory.

Leaving to Noel Carroll whatever corrections he may wish to make, I want quickly to pursue three points. First, although I was quoted in the *Chronicle* article, the phrase which King cites above does not come from any remarks I made. Indeed, none of the quoted phrases in his piece (all unattributed) come from me. I should indicate that the article failed to represent my views accurately. I had tried to convey to the reporter my belief that the interesting work in film theory showed a grounding in film history, while the interesting historical research was aware of its theoretical assumptions and implications. I failed to communicate this view to the reporter, who was bent on seeing theoretical reflection and historical research as inimically opposed. But the piece gives no reason for believing that I accept this antithesis. Moreover, I express the contrary view at the start of *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985; pp. xi–xii), a book which King reviewed in *Screen*.

Secondly, I have not, in the *Chronicle* or elsewhere, called for a cessation of ideological study of films. I challenge King to show any passage of my work which does so. I encourage scholars to undertake ideological analyses and interpretations, and I have offered some myself. (See *The Cinema of Carl-Theodor Dreyer*, 1981, pp. 90–2, 172–6, 191–201; *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 1985, pp. 228, 268–73, 335–6, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*, 1989, pp. 26–50, 161–79, 277–9, 282–93, 303–4, 307–8, 313–14, 330–2, 334–7, 346–7, and elsewhere.) Works on which I have collaborated with Kristin Thompson and Janet Staiger also discuss ideology in cinema. (To refer only to passages I wrote: *Film Art: An Introduction*, third edition, 1990, pp. 42–3 and elsewhere; *The Classical Hollywood*

Cinema, 1985, pp. 82–4, 300–4, 367–85, and elsewhere.) Nor have I called for ‘an end of ideology in cinema’ itself; the very idea seems quite obscure.

Thirdly, I have not condemned ‘symptomatic’ readings of films. King cites Chapter 4 of *Making Meaning* (1989) as a source for this claim, but I challenge him to find anything in that chapter which suggests that symptomatic reading is ‘antithetical to sound research’. Again, examples of symptomatic reading can be found in *Film Art*, pp. 336–42 and elsewhere, *Dreyer*, pp. 135–40, 144–8, and *Ozu*, pp. 166–75, 215–16, 235, 318–19, 370–4, and elsewhere.

Note that the issue which King raises is not whether my conceptions of ideology and symptomatic reading are balanced, useful, sufficiently comprehensive, or whatever. The question is simply whether I believe that the concepts are viable and ought to have a place in film studies. I obviously do. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, King’s remarks amount to an irresponsible sideswipe. Why is *Screen* publishing such stuff?

David Bordwell
University of Wisconsin-Madison

reviews

review article:

Andrew Goodwin and Garry Whannel (eds), *Understanding Television* (Studies in Culture and Communication Series). London and New York: Routledge, 1990, 192pp.

John Tulloch and Graeme Turner (eds), *Australian Television: Programs, Pleasures and Politics* (Australian Cultural Studies Series). Sydney, London, Boston and Wellington: Allen and Unwin, 1989, 204pp.

JENNIFER CRAIK

Does television studies constitute a branch of knowledge or is it a mere twiglet? In *Australian Television*, John Hartley observes that established disciplines and universities have spurned television as a legitimate object of study

[I]n the disciplined departments of the ivy league, television was not so much a branch as a *twiglet* of knowledge. Even now it isn't corporeal enough to have its own name – there are no Departments of, professors of, nor degree programs in *Television*. So television studies appeared merely as marginal activities conducted by the undisciplined younger element within traditional departments, or, in downmarket institutions, as a block, unit, module or stream in Communication, Cultural, or Media Studies – anything but Television. (p. 140)

Despite – perhaps because of – this marginal position, television studies was justified as a political and antiestablishment project, exposing the ideological determination of cultural production, distribution and consumption of media. Many of those early *exposés* have become classics – the 'ghosts' of cultural studies.¹ But those preoccupations have been supplanted by changing circumstances

¹ See Richard Dienst 'Cultural Studies: now and in the future' *Screen*, vol 31 no 3 (1990) pp 328–30

2 See Colin McCabe's intervention in a debate about the current trajectory of the British Film Institute in *Screen* vol 31 no 3 (1990), pp 322-3

3 Dienst, 'Cultural Studies now and in the future', p 329

4 *Ibid* p 331

5 *Ibid* p 328

6 *Ibid* p 329

The young turks of the 1970s are now senior academics with responsibilities; academia has a new agenda of accountability²; textual critiques have been supplanted by engagement with policy issues; and younger scholars have other interests

Richard Dienst refers to the growing 'skepticism about the salvational overtones of some Cultural Studies' as well as 'the vanishing art' of close textual analyses by 'partisans of the forgotten pleasures of the banal'.³ Media and cultural studies are in a state of flux and soul-searching. Theory has been replaced by pragmatism, empiricism and populism. Culture has become an elusive, inaccessible spectre.⁴ The certainty and dogmatism of the seventies have given way to pluralism and tolerance. We have sacrificed the political edge and the subversive outcomes

Although media and cultural studies have been admitted to the academy, television studies is still not quite respectable, but an adjunct to other fields. Academics and students are asking why and how should we study television? In other words, can television studies grow from a precocious twiglet into a respected branch of knowledge? The maturation process has entailed, in part, the publication of books⁵ – user-friendly collections for teaching media and cultural studies at tertiary level. Few have specifically concerned television, as Goodwin and Whannel note in their introduction to *Understanding Television* (p. 4) Designed to fill the gap, both *Understanding Television* and *Australian Television* are substantial volumes that display a confident and reflective air

Yet, whether these books mark the passage of television studies to disciplinary status is less certain. Television has always been a problem for analysts. Early effects studies were inconclusive: at most, television might reinforce existing attitudes and behaviours. Notwithstanding, television came to dominate domestic space and the routines of everyday life, becoming a major source of knowledge about events, issues and cultures – a literal 'window on the world'. Intuitively, the young turks felt, television *must* have some kind of impact on how people developed as cultural persons, if nothing else. But, since it was a supremely ephemeral medium – transient, trivial, the source of private pleasures – *how* could it be important?

The new analysts examined the textual forms constructed by television. Television studies focused on representations of everyday life as these offer viewing pleasures, subversions and popular taste cultures. As Dienst notes, everyday life was invoked in two ways – either in terms of its 'semiotic "density" [as] the abyss of specificity' or 'as a *series of problems* for the older kinds of analysis, as challenges to the machinery of psychoanalysis, semiotics and ideological critique'.⁶ In the form of analyses of generic programme types, the text has remained at the core of television studies. Both *Understanding Television* and *Australian Television* follow this convention. Each addresses television history, scheduling and

programming, drama documentaries and miniseries, quiz shows, television news, audiences, and 'special' audiences (children, blacks, women) Whereas some chapters perform analyses of particular programmes, others contextualize their focus, or explore processes of programming and viewing. Both books rise above the generic framework by emphasizing the uses of television. While both challenge common assumptions about this ultimate domestic medium, *Understanding Television* is the more conventional and disciplined volume, while by contrast *Australian Television* is provocative, coining new terms for the analysis of television

Understanding Television is an introductory text, canvassing debates, contextualizing television genres, and adopting a variety of analytical approaches. Rather than 'unify the contributions into a seamless position' (p. 7), the book allows differences to stand as counterpoint. As a collection, it provides a solid introduction to the dominant concerns of television studies

Paddy Scannell's revision of British broadcasting history sets the tone of *Understanding Television*. He queries the 'much misunderstood' (p. 26) role of Reith, arguing that Reith's desire to establish a broadcast medium which could 'lead public taste rather than pander to it' (p. 13) deserves credit. Reith's approach to broadcasting is likened to the manufacture of 'social cement binding people together in the shared idioms of a public, corporate, national life'. (p. 14) In an age of unprecedented international dominance of the media, Reithianism begins to look like a 'social good' rather than a hegemonic plot (p. 26) The development of broadcasting was part of the extension of political rights and of the formation of government programmes to increase access to social rights, a move to establish an independent public sphere 'as a public good and in the public interest' (p. 25) Recent developments in technology and the associated deregulation of media mean that the 'hard-won "public sphere" created over the last thirty years on national television may shatter into splinters'. (p. 26) Media have become a private commodity to be bought, sold, used and abused at whim.

As the institution of television has changed, so too has the art of scheduling. For *Understanding Television*, Richard Paterson has updated his seminal article on the construction of the family audience by television programmers.⁷ He argues that programmers are rethinking their 'techniques' of channel loyalty, inheritance, pre-echo, hammocking, common junction points and demographics in response to new, fragmented, active, even irascible, audiences. Schedules still construct audiences rather than respond to needs, but new regimes of broadcasting are generating new regimes of viewing. Although the rhetoric of the family continues to underpin regulatory codes, Paterson suggests that viewing practices may render family scheduling 'a historical curiosity' (p. 40)

Chapters by Andrew Goodwin on television news and Paul Kerr

7 Richard Paterson 'Planning the family: the art of scheduling' *Screen Education* no. 35 (1980), pp. 79-85

on drama documentary tackle questions of realism associated with producing television about real events. Goodwin lucidly queries the usual critiques of balance versus bias, suggesting that broadcasters' preference for a middle position 'is itself a forceful political bias. Moderation remains the "extremist" political dogma of television news' (p. 58). Drama documentary is even more acutely beset by problems of representation. Although the British documentary is highly regarded internationally, it is inherently the most controversial kind of television, subject to denunciation from any point along the political spectrum. Kerr locates the reasons for controversy in the lack of a 'truth' to be represented. A programme may inscribe a point of view, but audiences will interpret the message according to their own interests. For Kerr, a radical documentary is not given by its subject matter, but whether it achieves a

subtle assassination of the idea of documentary itself, the very conviction that drama and documentary are in some sense 'natural', 'neutral', and mutually exclusive categories rather than constantly fought-out frontiers within the cultural institutions of broadcasting (p. 87)

In contrast to the debate about realism, many television analysts have been more interested in fictional and trivial genres. Rosalind Brunt, Michael O'Shaughnessy, Garry Whannel, Mick Bowes and Verina Glaessner each speculate on the 'wonderful world', full of 'abundance, energy, and community' (p. 100) created by popular television. O'Shaughnessy dwells on the ambivalent reactions of audiences to the excess of popular television programmes. We deny we watch them, let alone that we enjoy them fulsomely, illicitly, or perversely:

Many of us will dismiss such television in one breath as 'trash', 'rubbish', or 'trivia', and, in the next, rave about the latest episode of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* or ask intently what's happened now to Den and Angie of *Eastenders*. Students in discussion will often deny that they ever even watch such programmes, preferring news, current affairs, and serious drama, but moments later admit to their intimate familiarity with Terry Wogan and Les Dawson. The more honest may admit to their enjoyment but preface this by saying: 'I know I shouldn't like these programmes . . .' We should note this desire to deny the validity of our own pleasures in popular cultural forms. (p. 91)

The pleasures of popular programmes derive from their relationship with the texture of everyday life, between the patterns and the determinants of everyday living. Although a family norm is often the centrepiece of each of those generic types, most programmes draw 'upon the tensions inherent in the "abnormality"

of these situations'. (pp. 132–3) Moreover, numerous shows are constructed around atypical configurations of domestic life. Whereas Brunt is concerned with how such 'jolly' address excludes viewers from power in the act of enjoining them in the wonderful world of television (p. 71), O'Shaughnessy suggests that popular television can help us make sense of our world 'by voicing, showing and trying to deal with our problems and contradictions'. (p. 101)

Within the analysis of popular television, many feminist writers have argued that soap operas offer a particular address to women viewers, relating specifically to the texture of women's lives, namely to the pleasures, pains and repetition of everyday domestic chores and timetables. Glaessner links the dominance of everyday conversation in the dialogue of soaps with the important role of language in women's lives through 'gossip, confessions, speculations, and exchanges of confidence'. (p. 119) Soaps offer particular pleasures for female viewers who can subvert the usual conventions of spectatorship and construct a viewing position that 'accords with feminine rather than patriarchal desire'. (p. 126) Filled with denial, guilt, compulsion, fascination, and private pleasures, popular television offers viewers a Pandora's Box of illicit goodies within these mundane forms.

In sum, *Understanding Television* is a well-chosen and well-paced collection of chapters designed as introductions and incorporating a wide range of work. By contrast, *Australian Television* is a bit of a larrikin. Covering the same television genres, this book emphasizes new ways to look at television analysis beyond the pleasures of the screen alone. As the title implies, it is preoccupied also with locating and defining distinctively *Australian* television and exploring its relationship with other forms of national culture. Symptomatically, perhaps, there is no sustained attention to the representation of women; although the analysis of the soap *Prisoner* (Grundy for Ten Network, 1978–86) by Ann Curthoys and John Docker provides a broader approach to gender issues than is offered by a concern with women's fictions and female audiences alone.⁸

The theme of *Australian Television* is the link between televisual genres and constructions of Australian identity. The quest for authentic Aussie culture is an antipodean preoccupation. As in other postcolonial societies, the ignominious circumstances that led to white settlement and later to 'independence' are a source of endless fascination and accounting. In the search for national identity, formative influences must be resisted as well as acknowledged. Australians constantly invoke the term 'cultural cringe' to describe endemic feelings of inferiority about their national culture. The inner turmoil is expressed by literature Professor Leonie Kramer, who, as chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, hoped to sell a new sense of Australian identity to television screens:

⁸ According to the introduction the 'gender imbalance' was exacerbated by the withdrawal of some contributors (p. xi)

The foreign image of us does not do us justice. When I am abroad I am still meeting people who think of us as not very informed, not very bright, ill-mannered and boorish. I feel I have to tell them that we are a modern, sophisticated and inventive community, even though I still have anxieties about Australia's culture (p. 19)

The search for national identity oscillates between what Dugald Williamson calls resisting the 'smooth' of European cultural heritage and influence and the 'rough' of the earthy, casual, antiauthoritarian little Aussie battler. (p. 96) Tulloch writes of the 'active but stoically irreverent Australian', in a country that has been 'threatened and exploited . . . but still a lucky country of sun-tanned, outdoors living'. (p. 135) As befits a nation of ex-convicts, disrespect for authority is purportedly reflected in the obsession with cutting down 'tall poppies' (deriding success) and revering outlaws, larrikins and transgressors.⁹

⁹ These themes can be found in the concepts of Australian identity employed by Curthoys and Docker (p. 57), Stuart Cunningham (pp. 42–48), and John Fiske (pp. 80, 85).

According to Graeme Turner, the Australian national character translates into 'transgressive television', or the manipulation and transformation of foreign televisual genres to subvert predictable formats, to counterpoint Aussie stereotypes with 'real' Aussie modes and manners, and to challenge the dominance of the screen over the viewer. Turner develops Adrian Martin's idea of 'stretch television', or the pleasures that arise from the certainties of generic formulae. These allow the audience to predict the broad turns of successive episodes of television series and serials.

formula is simultaneously the saddest and happiest fact of popular television. What makes sitcoms like *Taxi* or *Cheers* so rich is the pattern of familiarities and predictabilities they set up from week to week – comically perverting and reversing our expectations quite as much as they fulfil them. (p. 26)

But predictability becomes boring. Viewers 'secretly [wish] for a hiccup, a slip, a gaff somewhere along the way' (p. 27). Martin and Turner argue that programmes which have pursued the art of subversion through deliberate sabotage, transcendence and transgression of generic formulae have coalesced with myths of Australian identity to epitomize national television culture. According to Turner, this 'lack of respect for TV's conventions and formulas' has become the hallmark of Aussie television. (p. 37)

These ideas are developed in John Hartley's entertaining chapter proposing new ways of thinking about how programmes construct viewing possibilities and about how they are consumed. To complement McLuhan's concept of 'rearviewmirrorism', or the technological ability to see where one has come from, Hartley coins the term 'windscreenwiperism', the use of trailers to look 'the

viewer's future into the here and now, erasing distinctions between fact and fiction, between the past and the news' (p. 149)

By manipulating the viewer's relationship to the past and the future through instantaneous encapsulations of the present (screen time), Hartley suggests that television engages in the simultaneous erasure of the past (amnesia) as well as recalling the past (anamnesia). On the one hand, the *raison d'être* of television is that everything is new – brand new – and better than ever. On the other, television relies on knowledges and skills in order to decipher its images – understanding continuity editing, making intertextual connections, recognizing genres, and negotiating programming schedules. Provocatively, Hartley ventures that the pleasures of negotiating these televisual hurdles is a form of 'frottage', the pleasure that comes from a 'kind of furtive brushing, a glimpse, a frisson of excitement provoked by taking private pleasure from public contact' (p. 148). The strength of this chapter is Hartley's appreciation of the play between television programmes and viewers' stratagems of selecting and rejecting, enjoying and hating, accepting or subverting, what they see. As Turner argues, transgressive television 'shifts the balance of power away from the TV producer, the performer, or the contestant, onto the viewer', placing 'the viewer into an especially privileged position'. (p. 34) *Australian Television* may be overstating the uniqueness of this cultural form, but the collection certainly provokes readers to investigate the peculiarities of this permanently adolescent medium.

Both *Understanding Television* and *Australian Television* reflect the new maturity of television studies. Whether such studies have yet attained the coherence and rigour of a discipline is less certain, however. Many of the chapters in both books constitute useful introductory texts for students, addressing issues of programming and spectatorship within an appreciation of the institutional context of television. Gradually, then, the twiglets are being woven into nests. The challenge ahead is to position the nests in appropriate branches of knowledge.

review article:

Stephen Kruger and Ian Wall, *The Media Pack*. London: Macmillan Education, 1987, 158pp.

Stephen Kruger and Ian Wall, *The Media Manual: A Teacher's Guide to Media Studies*. London: Mary Glasgow Publications, 1988, 60pp.

Stephen Kruger and Ian Wall (eds), *Mediafile*. London: Mary Glasgow Publications, 1988– , continuing.

CHRIS RICHARDS

There is a kind of incongruity about writing a review of teaching materials for *Screen*. There has been little sense of a continuing debate around media educational practice since the absorption of *Screen Education* early in the 1980s, and although there have been two or three 'special issues' of *Screen* largely devoted to matters of pedagogy, there has been no consistent evidence of a readership which engages with, and contributes to, questions of classroom practice. As I understand it, the readership of *Screen* remains a small but international one, substantially centred on institutions of higher education. Meanwhile the arguments and innovations in and around the practice of media education in primary and secondary schools, in tertiary and further education colleges, have been conducted elsewhere. *Media Education Initiatives* (initially from SEFT, but also defunct), *Media Education* (initially from Bracknell Media Centre) and *The English Magazine* (ILEA/London English and Media Centre) have been, within England at least, the most obvious sources of information and debate for teachers of media studies outside higher education. I am sure there are primary, secondary and tertiary teachers amongst *Screen* readers, but assume they are accustomed to looking elsewhere for news of, and critical

comment upon, the rapidly expanding array of media packs, files, manuals, handbooks, introductions and workshops aimed at teachers of media studies. But perhaps what follows can be read more broadly as suggesting how particular teaching materials have contributed to the constitution of the disciplinary area of media studies in the secondary school curriculum.

The Media Pack, *The Media Manual* and *Mediafile* have already been reviewed in *The English Magazine* and elsewhere; which should cause no surprise, since these items began their published life back in 1987. I have seen *The Media Pack* lying around in school staffrooms and stockrooms in the past year or so, looking already well used and, despite the apparently impervious yellow folder in which it is encased, almost old. This is no reflection on the value of the pack or its companions, but rather a reminder that these things are already in use, have been so for some time, and do indeed anchor many teachers' perceptions of what media studies should be.

In the midst of the current proliferation of published materials and manuals it is important to draw attention to the publication of a collection of investigations into 'classroom' practice under the title *Watching Media Learning: Making Sense of Media Education*.¹ The debate through which this collection gathered its momentum is not new: Judith Williamson made an important and incisive case for attention to the detail of actual classroom practice in the penultimate *Screen Education*, and I too made a move in much the same direction with an article in the same issue.² The importance of *Watching Media Learning* is that it attempts to take the argument made by Williamson further, by drawing together a group of teachers to carry out coordinated, sometimes collaborative, but always mutually supported, classroom research over a period of three years. In this way, the Media Teachers' Research Group, convened by David Buckingham at the University of London Institute of Education, has attempted to produce systematic, though often tentative, documents of media education in practice.

By contrast, the difficulty that arises in reviewing teaching materials and the advice that accompanies them is that they bear an exceptionally abstract relation to the actual contexts of their use. It is not that easy to offer very secure generalizations about such materials when they may well be incorporated into a variety of perhaps very different practices. Hopefully, they can be used in ways which exceed their more limited formulations. *The Media Pack* at least begins to acknowledge this, though this is hardly a strong line to pursue if achieving publication is a matter of persuading editors of the virtues of one set of codified teaching strategies over another. The imperatives governing the production of *Watching Media Learning* are not those which have been recognized by most publishers in a period dominated by the introduction of the GCSE and the National Curriculum, and by a variety of initiatives in

1 David Buckingham (ed.), *Watching Media Learning: Making Sense of Media Education* (London: Falmer Press, 1990).

2 Judith Williamson, 'How does girl number twenty understand ideology?', *Screen Education* no. 40 (1981-2), pp. 80-7; Chris Richards, *Classroom readings* (ibid. pp. 67-79).

relation to primary, 'prevocational' and A level media education. With some justification, books about how to initiate, sustain and secure varieties of media work have prevailed in the publishers' lists.

The Media Pack, published by Macmillan Education, is organized in six sections of considerably varying length. It offers structures and materials for GCSE media studies and invites two principal uses: either as a resource for teaching planned around 'key concepts' – language, genre, representation, production/ownership/control, audience, or for the investigation of a series of particular media – television, film, news, advertising, pop music, radio. In fact some combination of both routes through the pack is likely to be adopted by most teachers. By far the most substantial body of material relates to film and television, whereas news, advertising, pop music and radio are compressed within a single, shorter, section of the pack. The sixth section, 'Cross-media assignments', is no more than a list of essay titles grouped under concept headings. Such an uneven allocation of space is hardly unusual but, given the particular age band to which the material is addressed, it is worth considering whether the pack privileges media which may not be most central to intended students' everyday lives.

Until recently few published teaching materials dealt with comics, for example, or with popular forms in the field of music. *The Media Pack* is also relatively inattentive to such forms and tends in consequence to maintain media studies as a discipline constituted around a substantial and dominant core of film and television studies. The tendency in its brief sections devoted to music is to veer back to television as a more secure source of models of current media practice, and perhaps therefore to lose the opportunity for a more open-ended questioning of the formations which have characterized popular music. With music, comics and, say, pirate radio stations, there is really too great a diversity for teachers to expect much in the way of common ground with their students, and inevitably, the detailed and intimate knowledge which students may have of some forms exceeds that of the teacher and cannot easily be subjected to the categories which may be brought to bear upon such knowledge in a classroom context. There is some acknowledgement of this by Kruger and Wall, but the handling of music does not open up a great deal of space for thinking through what is problematic and complex.

One example of *The Media Pack* approach to music may serve to illustrate the style of teaching it encourages. In a section on 'Image creation', linking advertising and pop music, students are invited to think of the past. 'In a way things were very simple in the 1960s. Put in crude terms, much of the time you were either a Beatles' fan or a Rolling Stones' fan' (p. 143). This, and the associated task involving lists of features characterizing in one column 'The Beatles' and in the other 'The Rolling Stones', suggests a classroom pragmatism.

which has become somewhat detached from a concern for making lessons a matter of producing 'really useful knowledge'. This is one small example drawn from a substantial body of materials, but I think it symptomatic of something which characterizes *The Media Pack* more generally. There is a problem with the schematic way in which areas of study are constituted; there is a fondness for charts, and too little space for wondering about the categories upon which chart constructions have drawn. Charts may well be a valuable means of providing the necessary structure and organization a classroom lesson requires, but they are also too often a means of simply appearing to do useful work. Too often the 'task' is to 'make a list' or 'fill in'; and, though such initial mapping exercises are often valuable, what matters more is the extent to which students can talk through and reflect upon such means of constituting knowledge. In every instance there is a need for students to consider how adequate to their existing knowledge they can make the proffered schema.

A further, and related area of difficulty is the unspecified relationship of *The Media Pack* to the more practical dimensions of the GCSE courses it seeks to serve. There are suggested activities which could be given a more explicitly practical orientation, but the importance of actually engaging in forms of media production is not addressed. Again, it is worth noting here that several of the contributions to *Watching Media Learning* offer informed arguments for a more central place for practical production in media studies courses. In *The Media Pack* many of the proposed assignments which conclude each topic take the form of a proposition coupled with the instruction to 'discuss': thus "'TV requires little imagination, Radio a lot.'" Discuss'; or "'Film is not an art – it is all economics.'" Discuss'. Sometimes there seems little difference anyway between the 'Tasks' and the 'Assignments'. 'Write an essay entitled "The media are all dependent on one another, none more than Pop Music with TV and Radio." Do you agree?' (this is a 'Task'); "'Pop Music is all style and no content.'" Do you agree?' (this is an 'Assignment'). This lack of distinction is evidence of a more general absence of clarity about what kinds of things students are expected to do in media studies lessons or, indeed, in investigations to be carried on outside lessons. A striking example of this comes in the assignment list at the end of the section on 'Other media': 'Try to find out the size and type of audience who listen to car radios'. This might or might not be a worthwhile piece of 'research', but there is no indication of how fifteen- and sixteen-year-old students taking a GCSE course could begin to carry out such an enquiry.

Much of the material relating to television and film is better than the examples cited here might suggest, but there is still a prevailing impression that 'doing' media studies is a process of listing and

filling in charts, culminating in the writing of an essay. Making effective use of *The Media Pack* therefore depends very much upon a careful selection of elements and an integration of those into a more varied and more production based pedagogy. In such a pedagogy, the existing knowledge which students bring to their work – knowledge of genre, for example – is put to use and made an object of reflection and increasingly explicit conceptual study. Kruger and Wall do have a further Macmillan publication in press, *The Practical Pack*, which may to some extent address the lack identified here.

The Media Manual and *Mediafile*, both from Mary Glasgow Publications, are closely related projects, the first authored by Kruger and Wall and the latter retaining a substantial degree of involvement on their part, while also drawing upon the work of other teachers in the field. *The Media Manual* is addressed to 'non-specialists' – that is, to teachers in secondary schools who have no existing involvement in the teaching of media studies. It is written in that bland, familiar and pragmatic style which is, I suppose, what teachers are expected to be able to cope with and tolerate. Media studies is still widely regarded as marked by a legacy of 'Theory', even by a risk of continuing contamination by 'theoreticism'; and this is presumably a tendency *The Media Manual* seeks to avoid. As the publisher's handout declares, it is written in 'a clear, user-friendly style . . . avoids theoretical jargon and focuses on the day-to-day aspects of teaching about the media in the classroom'. It is not *Screen Education*; and to some extent addressing teachers as an audience wary of being too 'intellectual' about popular culture is justified 'historically' – by which I mean to acknowledge that there have been problems in the past. But there are some disadvantages in adopting a stance which implies that teaching media studies can be largely, if not exclusively, a matter of fairly comfortable amusement: the mode of address implies a relationship between an elder, experienced colleague and a novice teacher; and much of the 'advice' comes out of, and returns to, the familiar common sense of teachers' staffrooms. Such common sense is indeed a mixture of pragmatic adjustment to real constraints and a too easy acceptance that some things are just too obvious to be examined too closely. The 'advice' offered here does therefore need to be read as coming out of a common sense formed in a period when teachers have been devalued and undermined.

There are elements which compensate for the difficulties here identified with *The Media Pack*, but these are entangled with other, equally problematic, discourses. In their discussion of the need to establish the practice of students writing production logs, Kruger and Wall comment

It is important that they [students] learn to analyse their efforts

and introduce an element of self-assessment into their media work. Much of the log will inevitably be taken up with information about how things were done, but the brighter student may well start to philosophise about the nature of the project, the prospective audience and so on. Whatever their abilities, right from the very start they must get into the habit of writing up everything that happens. They must quickly appreciate that they too are in the business of 'selling' themselves here. They should write more rather than less. (p. 27)

There is here a replication of commonplace assumptions about the terms on which the so called 'brighter' (and presumably 'duller') students engage with educational work. But this is compounded by the acceptance of a discourse of 'commodification' increasingly invasive in education in the past few years, which is irresistably illustrated by a line from a memo I once received in a tertiary college, reminding us to think of report-writing as a 'front-line marketing exercise'. Is media studies really to be about encouraging students to get into 'the business of "selling" themselves'? The importance that is rightly attached to reflective writing in relation to practical work is here argued in terms which should be questioned and, I would hope, rejected. *The Media Manual* has its uses but, as I have said, needs to be read as a document of teacherly common sense in the late eighties, not merely as a 'manual', a 'guide' full of practical 'advice'.

Mediafile is a helpful and continuing series of 'teachers' notes' addressing a variety of media issues. Many notes in the series deal with such well established topics as advertising or television police series, while others provide information about more recent and immediate issues: government proposals for broadcasting in the 1990s, telethons, world cup football and – unusually – the paperback industry. There is an encouraging sense of the media field being opened up and diversified here, and although some of the material looks somewhat similar to that provided in *The Media Pack*, the broader range of authors from various schools and colleges counters any tendency to revert to strategies familiar from the earlier publication.

To conclude, then, it has to be emphasized that what is needed more than mere reviews of teaching materials is a continuing debate around the use which teachers make of what is available to them. How media studies is formed in schools cannot simply be read off from the materials which are sold to them, and my observations here relate to examples of just one component of a complexly constituted field. There is a need for empirical research and for accounts of practice which are attentive to the particular contexts in which the teaching of media studies takes place.

review:

Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, *Film Theory: An Introduction*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988, 248pp.

Fred Inglis, *Media Theory: An Introduction*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, 212pp.

ROBERT FERGUSON

Publications which attempt to address a wide range of theoretical developments in relation to the study of film, television and the mass media are always fraught with difficulties. If the very breadth of existing approaches and paradigms is daunting, this is only the beginning of the problem. A second dilemma which the writers of such publications face is one of ascertaining who their audience might be and the purposes which their extensive overviews are intended to serve. Third, and perhaps most troublesome, is the possibility that the time might be ripe for detailed and penetrating reappraisal of the most influential theories which have held sway in the fields of film and media studies over the last twenty years or so. This last point is made all the more urgent by the need to address, in a coherent manner, the burgeoning of postmodernism – either as a catch-all theoretical term for a *fin-de-siècle* intellectual malaise or, depending upon one's position, as a breath of fresh air. It is with these questions in mind that I turn now to two very different books.

Robert Lapsley's and Michael Westlake's *Film Theory An Introduction*, published in 1988, is an ambitious and well-considered piece of work, whose authors are concerned to find ways of communicating ideas which are often opaque and are seldom easily accessible. The book bears all the hallmarks of years of teaching, as its authors attempt to distil into cogent form the most informative

traits and trajectories identifiable in the work of a broad range of thinkers. Beginning with 1968 – a date which for many readers may, sadly, have no more significance than 1945 or 1956 – Lapsley and Westlake patiently unfold a complex intellectual history. Their task is not, however, made easier by the relative absence in the text of any detailed reference to the sociopolitical climate in which emerged many of the ideas discussed here. Reference to *les événements* is not enough. Nevertheless, the book does provide, in chapter 1, a convincing critical introduction to the thought of Louis Althusser and its influence upon film theory. The speed with which the text necessarily unfolds requires that this same chapter must also cover the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacques Lacan. This it does in a measured manner; but, to choose another metaphor, the mixture which percolates through is thick and strong. Many of the sentences here read like topics for seminar discussion. In fairness, however, it must be said that the work of Saussure and Lacan is returned to in more detail later in the book. Chapter 1 also introduces the work of Foucault, the authors' comments on whom serve to illustrate my point.

Foucault's thinking, like Nietzsche's, is perspectivist; even more so in that it does not offer an ontology. So although, in a Nietzschean vein, he wrote of society as 'a multiple and mobile field of force-relations, wherein far-reaching but never completely stable effects of domination are achieved', and placed emphasis on events rather than things, Foucault nonetheless did not offer a global theory of society. (p. 19)

The status and relevance of such writing, I suggest, has to be gauged in relation to the audience being addressed, which the bookjacket identifies as 'the cinemagoer and the student'. Both will need to be intellectually acute.

The next chapter is concerned with semiotics, covering such thinkers as Metz, Saussure, Peirce, Wollen, Deleuze, de Lauretis, Lacan, Benveniste, Martinet, Pasolini, Eco, Heath, Coward and Ellis, Willemen, MacCabe and Derrida. Once again the prose is tightly written and often lucid, but the sheer volume of material discussed means that references are often tantalizing in their brevity. Chapters follow on psychoanalysis, authorship, narrative, realism and the avant garde. At no point do the authors lose their clarity of expression or their enthusiasm for the subject under discussion; but at no point until the afterword is there any letup in the inexorable drive towards intellectual miasma. For while so many of the theoretical parameters constructed, reconstructed and deconstructed exercised appeal in their heyday, in reconsidering them in this excellent digest one is struck by their creeping decay. It would, of course, be nonsense to suggest that the theoretical trajectories of the last twenty years offer little that will regain validity in years to

come. But one senses in this book, for better and for worse, a last gasp of the old epistemological order

Lapsley and Westlake have produced a book which has fearlessly laid it all out before us. Where they have been less successful is in providing a certain amount of depth analysis, essential if one is to come to terms with thinkers as diverse as Lacan and Jameson. Which brings me back to the question of what this book is *for*. As an introductory text it is, frankly, rather dense. As a text for revision purposes it is most useful. In the hands of an inventive teacher it could become invaluable. The book ends with a clarion call, acknowledging the importance of gender as an issue, but oddly leaving out race. The call is to the Left, who have 'won and held' the terrain of film studies. Perhaps. But I sense also in that call the whisper of dead leaves.

Fred Inglis provides a different approach to a similar subject in *Media Theory. An Introduction*, which has, unsurprisingly, a broad sweep to it. This book is in part the outcome of experience gained in the University of Bristol School of Education graduate seminar. Inglis has, he says, made off with the best ideas of many of the contributors to that series of seminars. He has written a book which attempts to be user-friendly, and which does indeed demonstrate considerable energy and zest. It is also a book which is strong at a hortatory level, but less convincing when dealing with specific theoretical approaches. The claims which Inglis makes for theory are enthusiastically put. He wants the reader to recognize the liberatory and potentially empowering aspects of theoretical understanding:

The illumination that comes when we truly understand something which was earlier a deep puzzle to us is like coming out of a dark, twisting path in the woods where we are anxiously afraid we are lost, into the wide space and bright light of a clearing which leads us out into the open. The relief of such a moment and the exhilarated surge of the sense of freedom and happy self-possession that goes with it is at the heart of education. It is for this that we use theory (p. 175)

With this exhortation in mind, I shall discuss in a little more detail some of the theories outlined in this book. What it offers is a taste, a sample, and sometimes, in the author's words, a caricature of various positions. Consider the chapter entitled 'Theories of ideology', in which four thinkers are highlighted, though others are mentioned. The four – Marx and Engels, Gramsci and Althusser – are given rather hectic coverage. Inglis begins by suggesting that Marx and Engels had what he calls a 'fix theory' of society – that the contradictions of capitalism are hidden by liberal ideology and the whole thing is one big fix which is accepted by the people. This reading of Marx and Engels is preceded by a brief reference to 'The German Ideology', and followed by the suggestion that Marx and

Engels 'dealt blithely with this problem by simply designating all those who credulously believed an ideology which ran bluntly against their own best interests as being in a state of "false consciousness"' (p. 79) The trouble with this theory, according to Inglis, is that it is 'crude'. Even leaving aside the fact that Marx never actually wrote about false consciousness, it certainly is a crude theory – but not one I would easily associate with Marx.

When writing about Gramsci, Inglis emphasizes the concept of hegemony. This he interprets as being concerned mainly with the 'heavy, saturating omnipresence of the way things are'. (p. 81) He then speaks of how hegemony 'invades and pervades our common sense'. This is a partial reading of the concept; it mentions neither the notion of consent backed up by coercion, nor the suggestion that hegemony is a state of tension in a power relationship: contestation and contradiction are not part of the emphasis here on hegemony as a descriptor of the nature of conformism.

On Althusser, Inglis is also brief and partial. He concentrates on the notion of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) while giving little indication of the complexity of the essay in which this now infamous term first appeared. Althusser, we are told, argued for the 'fix theory' on a very grand scale. There is no mention of interpellation, identity, subjectivity, or of the alleged antihumanism of Althusser. Nor is there any mention of Althusser's emphasis on the materiality of ideology as a lived practice. Instead Inglis concentrates on the functionalist dimension of Althusser's essay to point out that it is an example of theory at its most impersonal and assertive. He nevertheless supports Althusser's argument in citing the work of the Glasgow Media Group (GMG). Both Althusser and the GMG, I would argue, have important and lasting contributions to make to debates about ideology; but Inglis oversimplifies the former and chooses an unfortunately crass example from the work of the latter.

Thus, cabinet ministers are interviewed either in quiet voices in a big room or from behind an imposing battery of loudspeakers. Local political figures – councillors, say, or union spokesmen [sic] – are interviewed as they move down the street and in the wet (p. 85).

Elsewhere in the book, however, Inglis argues that it is through their cultural life that people *are* able to demonstrate opposition to the ideological fixers. This is because

... culture as we have seen (and as we live it, day by day) is a queer, unregulated thing. Part of the reason for having a cultural life is that there we absolutely refuse to do as we're told. It has an inherent subversiveness, which is why teaching it in schools is such

a bloody business. Entertainment is always liable to get out of hand. All festivals worry the police (p. 121)

At the same time Inglis is not afraid to venture the unfashionable suggestion that the Leavises had something worthwhile to say about these matters. He cites Queenie Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public* with approval, whilst admitting that it is a flawed work. He feels that it is too easy to reject out of hand the mixture of the guerrilla and the evangelist to be found in the work of 'the most intellectually thorough-going and convincing of British critics'. For Inglis, the Leavises propounded an argument that is at the heart of media studies in general. He poses this argument as a series of questions: 'What is one to say before the horribleness of a newspaper such as the *Sun*, a novel like *The Rats*, a movie like *The Terminator*?' Inglis is not so willing to ridicule the Leavises because they found the lot of the wheelwright more pleasing than that of the person at the supermarket checkout or the VDU. Unfortunately, Inglis often weakens his case by citing poor examples, such as the GMG one already mentioned; or by tipping over into schoolboyish enthusiasm, delighting for example in the fact that in *Culture and Environment* Leavis had faked the texts of the 'wickedly convincing' advertisements which he then condemned. Inglis will not be swayed; and one more quotation must suffice to show how he creates contradictions in his own work. Here he is talking about 'modern culture', which is presumably very different from that 'queer thing' through which people assert their right to refuse to do as they are told. Inglis is writing, it should be noted, in praise of Leavis.

But his main critical premises stand four-square. Modern culture is unstoppably commercial. Modern media systems are permeated by lies and deceit: the word 'propaganda' was coined about them. Individuals cannot just be educated *into* their own culture, they must also be educated *against* it. (p. 35)

In other chapters, Inglis provides useful data and summaries of debates about the 'effects' tradition and the number-crunching dimension of media theory. These are useful and informative, and the chapter on practical media work, in which the potential of photography as a medium for the student of media theory is discussed, is probably the most convincing in the book.

The overall effect of *Media Theory: An Introduction* is, however, somewhat patchy. There is some sloppy editing and referencing, including, for example, mention of the two famous photographers 'Bill Brand' and 'Don McCulloch'. Inglis also describes *Screen* as 'the house magazine of the British Film Institute', which might bring a wry smile to longer-term readers of this journal. This is a book worth reading with all the care its author invites us to take when faced with products of the media. Its positive potential lies in the

fact that it propounds with some passion arguments which are out of favour but which might still generate valuable debate amongst those entering the world of media theory. The negative potential of the book, however, is that, taken at face value, it might well give students some very odd ideas about important critical positions and paradigms. At its worst it could be downright misleading.

Both books here reviewed attempt, with some success, to describe where media theory and film theory have been. As such they are necessary, in that they begin to provide students and lecturers with the means to situate a complex array of theoretical developments. But this is a rather thankless task. *Film Theory: An Introduction* is intellectually sharp but inclines towards the opaque. *Media Theory: An Introduction* is a little too chatty and simplistic. Neither addresses the crucial theoretical moment in which they were written. But perhaps this would be asking too much of texts already weighed down with the accumulated theoretical ballast of more than a century. The merit of these two works will be judged in the light of recent claims and counterclaims by theorists of the postmodern, of the 'active' audience, of the end of ideology, and of New Times. Both are worth reading.

review:

Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner and Eva-Maria Warth (eds), *Remote Control: Television, Audiences, and Cultural Power*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989, 262pp.

Patricia Mellencamp (ed.), *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press and BFI Publishing, 1990, 304pp.

PHILIP SCHLESINGER

In different ways, each of these collections offers an entry point into the (almost) current state of play in television studies. What both volumes share are common origins in conferences. Seiter and her colleagues organized an international meeting in Tübingen to discuss television audiences in early 1987. For her part, Mellencamp assembled a different international group in Milwaukee in the Spring of 1988. Taken together, the two represent a wide range of current approaches to television analysis and draw upon work from both sides of the Atlantic, as well as from Australia and Israel.

The books differ in one important respect. *Remote Control* has the advantage of a central focus – namely, the largely qualitative analysis of the television audience. By comparison, *Logics of Television* has the inherent difficulty of trying to encompass the shifting field of television studies. Where the two collections once again converge, however, is in the problem that both face in turning conferences – at which we are told there was so much enjoyable *meeting of minds* – into viable texts that can offer a modicum of pleasure to a reader. In this respect, neither can claim to be an unalloyed success. There are individual pieces of considerable merit, to be sure, particularly those taking an historical approach in the

Mellencamp collection. But the bag is a mixed one and should be unpacked with the help of judiciously chosen music. So, if by no means twin troughs, nor are they twin peaks either.

In recent years, the qualitative analysis of the television audience has become highly fashionable. A crude index of its popularity has been the substantial number of papers on the theme at each successive International Television Studies Conference since 1984. Another indication is the growing volume of books and papers that has become available since the mid 1980s, of which we have one example here. There are a number of reasons for this. Qualitative reception studies offered a reaction to *Screen* theory (in the bad old days of this journal's previous incarnation) and also to the various empiricisms that flourished under such labels as 'effects analysis' and 'uses and gratifications' research. The dominance of various neoMarxisms in the late 1970s prepared the ground for attempting to investigate the interpretive frameworks of a variety of social groups by means of which the dominant ideology was mediated. Add to this the convergent feminist interest in women's reception of popular culture, and you begin to have some of the elements that prepared the contemporary terrain.

Unfortunately, a substantial part of *Remote Control* is rather self-indulgently taken up with placing itself inside the development of the new wave of audience research. One piece on this by the editors would have been quite enough. The book divides into two sections of six papers each. The first is about 'theory' and the second a set of 'case studies'. Taken *en bloc*, the case studies have more of novelty to offer than the discussions of audience studies, most of which rehearse rather familiar themes.

By way of introduction, Ellen Seiter and her colleagues attempt to tease out the common features of their contributors' work – it is all 'critical' in various senses of that overworked term – and stress the overarching commitment to an 'active' conception of the audience and to a politics of giving voice to the unheard, of 'the perspectives of people of color, of the elderly, gays and lesbians, women and the poor' (p. 4). The editors rightly sound a cautionary note about assuming that all viewing is to be subsumed under the rubric of 'pleasure', and confess that a political economy of television is missing altogether from this highly culturalist collection. Consumption may be analytically divorced from production, but it hardly helps to keep the latter almost entirely out of the frame, as is only too obvious here.

Of the theoretical pieces, two stand out as of particular value, and perhaps all the more so since they are somewhat detached from the surrounding mutual massage. In one of these, Claus-Dieter Rath offers some sharp reflections upon the nature of live television and how this may in some respects reconstitute the spatiotemporal frames of the collectivities addressed.

Since live broadcasts are produced for a 'mass audience', they don't deal with unique objects for individual viewers. Rather, the specific uniqueness implied here is signified by the collective, simultaneous perception of an event charged with symbolic value. In this sense, we can say that something like a 'live aura' exists. It inscribes its audiences into the social order of what can be called the 'television community' (p 88)

Rath focuses upon the major televised event (whether concerning a symbolic act such as the opening of a parliament or a heavily hyped sporting fixture or a child trapped down a well) and interprets this as a sociopolitical ritual that offers a point of entry into a collective experience for the individual. In this regard, his work relates to earlier studies conducted by Philip Elliott, David Chaney, and Daniel Dayan. The argument is that television creates a kind of community that shares an imaginary totality, one that transcends existing forms of affiliation and solidarity. Of course, there is something in this, but this vision of the recomposition of the audience – one that finally converges with the rather dubious postmodernist perspective articulated in the book by John Fiske – leaves aside the counterentropic features of social life: nations, ethnicities, religions, classes, genders still provide discourses and frameworks of interpretation that may secure quite distinctive anchorage points for their members; and collectivities of viewers are anyhow fractured by divergent interests and different endowments of cultural capital.

For her part, Charlotte Brunsdon (in an essay that reappears, somewhat expanded, in *Logics of Television*) marks a recognition of the proper limits of audience analysis. Responding to a current tendency to dissolve the textuality of television into the texture of everyday reception practices (a line represented here by David Morley), Brunsdon argues that text and audience need to be kept analytically distinct. A major reason for this, she suggests, is that in order to think about how television might be different, we need to look beyond what audiences make of the television that they already consume. (pp 125–6) For Brunsdon, the problem now is how to go beyond the accumulation of 'an ethnography of particular practices' (p 122).

Indeed, whether 'ethnography' is an apt description of such work at all is a point raised by Len Ang. She rightly observes that the term is conventionally restricted to the in-depth field research of a culture, but sees it as justified in audience research because this is trying to offer thorough insights into the 'lived experience' of media consumption. (pp 110–1, fn 2) This is a weak justification, since a great deal of the research in the new tradition consists of rather brief encounters. One of the most fleeting imaginable is captured for posterity here by Dorothy Hobson, who describes being – quite

literally – out to lunch with a group of six women with whom she discusses soap opera

Jan-Uwe Rogge offers a representative account of the domestic viewing approach, first signalled by Hermann Bausinger at the start of the 1980s and subsequently developed by David Morley first alone and then with Roger Silverstone. Rogge's account of the place of television in the family is quite insightful, with instances of how viewing may variously structure interaction in a single-parent family or where a father becomes unemployed. Curiously, he insists upon describing this research as 'qualitatively oriented field work' (p. 174) despite the fact that a statistically significant 420 families were interviewed and a standardized questionnaire was used alongside other methods such as participant observation. Why should the place of quantitative methods be denied here? Is it fear of being labelled empiricist? There is surely a case for exploring further how quantitative and qualitative methods can be productively combined in audience research, rather than seeing them as polar opposites

Both John Tulloch's account of how he gained access to elderly viewers in Bournemouth through the good offices of a helpful uncle, and Seiter and her coeditors' report of how they went about recruiting western Oregon soap-opera viewers offer some useful insights into the methods that may be employed by would-be researchers; and not least, in the latter case, into the role of gender in the research process. The Oregon study is particularly revealing about the complex modes of identification and distancing between women viewers and the female characters of daytime soaps.

It is much less easy to characterize the central themes of *Logics of Television*. One is not helped by a 'prologue' that begins thus: 'This is not a proper introduction but rather a collection of impressions

(p. 1) Perhaps throwing in the towel in this way is understandable, given the diversity of content and in some instances a lamentable tendency to write for obscurity. Whether *Logics* has any logic beyond some principle of convenience is a moot point. The book contains pieces ranging from banality in cultural studies, via historical work, to analyses of postmodernity, representation and television and catastrophe. Overall, though, where *Logics of Television* fails in overall coherence, it at least offers a good deal more in the way of originality than *Remote Control*

John Caughie's essay picks up a theme that runs through the latter book – the diversity of interpretation of film and television. But this time, the focus is on the role of national identity as a factor that complicates 'notions of the indifference of an essentialised and universal television'. (p. 48) Nationhood's relationship to television has been neglected, he suggests – although perhaps rather less than he thought in 1988, and certainly hardly at all now as more and more studies appear on this question. What Caughie wants to argue (using the category of irony) is that playful distanciation allows the

viewer to effect a breach between televisual texts and their interpretation: ergo, playing at being American can still leave you intact as a Scot. But, as Caughie himself admits, it all depends upon the conditions under which the game is played. And the politics of irony does not make for a rallying call when people get the wind up and reach for their cultural defence manuals.

Some of the best pieces in *Logics of Television* offer precisely that grasp of historical development and of political economics that *Remote Control* almost entirely lacks. In one such account, Lynn Spigel presents an adroit exploration of the history of television's introduction into the domestic sphere. Much of this reconstruction is carried out by studying middle-class women's home magazines of the period 1948–55, which encapsulated rules for thinking about television as a domestic object and its place in the family (ostensibly a source of harmony!) Spigel's survey of the contemporary literature also reveals worries about the impact of television on children and upon male authority in the home, and traces the subtle shifts in conceptions of television's role in the home as second sets and more fragmented viewing began to be advocated. It is worth stressing that she is talking about the mid 1950s and not the 1980s.

Other contributors also show the value of such cultural history. William Boddy, for instance, presents an account of the quiz show scandals of the late 1950s, in particular the rigging of *The \$64,000 Question*. As Boddy points out, such fixing had an underlying economic logic

The use of spectacle, suspense, and sympathetic protagonists in these ostensible contests of knowledge formed the commercial imperative and dramatic principles of quiz show rigging. (p. 104)

Such work points up the useful connections that can be made between examining audience engagement with such spectacles as game shows and quizzes and the broader political economy within which decisions about production are made.

An even more direct link is forged by Eileen Meehan's highly original account of how the broadcasting audience has been constructed as a commodity. What she does is scrutinize the historical development of the ratings market and the role that this has played in US broadcasting (and by extension elsewhere) in selling audiences to advertisers within a commercial broadcasting system. Meehan shows how advertisers were driven to seek a source of information about both the quality and quantity of broadcast audiences that was independent of the broadcasters themselves. This opened the road successively to the Crossley, Hooper and Nielsen ratings systems, the last of which became a monopoly in 1950. The commodity audience thus defined through the people meter has been adjusted to take account of cable and satellite distribution, and, it is convincingly argued, acts as the crucial arbiter of taste. In

yet another strong piece of historical research, Jane Gaines scrutinizes an aspect of TV merchandising rarely examined. By way of a case study of Superman, she focuses on how trademark law has come to be used to protect popular icons, overwhelming US copyright law since the late 1940s.

If in its historical dimension *Logics of Television* offers an alternative thrust to the fixation with the contemporary in *Remote Control*, there is some convergence in articles dealing with television and temporality. Claus-Dieter Rath's concerns are picked up, with some common points of reference, by Mary Ann Doane and Patricia Mellencamp, both of whom write about how catastrophe is handled by television. These chapters connect up with a well-established line of work in the sociology of journalism in a conjunction that merits further exploration. Doane argues that catastrophes are basically infringements of the temporal order, and that television is both obliged to report them as such while at the same time trying to make them manageable by surrounding them with commentary. For her part, Mellencamp broadly concurs, seeing television as a conservative medium in which the coverage of disasters reassures us that we are not there in the bomb blast, in the earthquake, or down the well.

In sum, then, this seems one more occasion on which to invoke that weary old cliché about the curate's egg. Were I the prudent (and doubtless impecunious) buyer of books to whom this review is addressed, I should save my pennies and become a frequenter of the library on this occasion. A few good papers is no excuse for two books.

review:

Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (eds), *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990, 295pp.

ERICA CARTER

Readers whose professional/academic identities are founded – as, in part at least, is mine – on the practice of teaching ‘as a feminist’ will, I imagine, be all too familiar with the contradictions of that enterprise. Feminist politics since the early 1970s has been grounded in utopian desires for democratic empowerment. Within the framework of contemporary academic feminism, those desires might be assumed to translate themselves into pedagogic strategies which deliver control over the learning process into student hands, and produce the seminar room as a site as much for the negotiation of collective intellectual and political concerns as for the mediation of feminist ‘content’ by ourselves as experts.

So much for pedagogic utopias. In practice, it is not only the entrenched authoritarianism of academic forms (there is much to be written for instance on the contradictions of *lecturing* on feminist politics) that militates against a feminist transformation of the Academy. Elizabeth Nielsen, in her article on Hollywood costumers in *Fabrications*, references the contemporary phenomenon of postfeminism: ‘younger women who dissociate themselves from feminism . . . and who take their current status for granted’. (p. 177) Dismayed by postfeminism’s erasure of historical memory, much feminist teaching is motivated today by desires to relay to students submerged narratives of the feminist struggles (‘our’ struggles – as ‘older women’?) which, we are quick to point out, have smoothed the way for them today. Scurrilously perhaps, one might speculate on the extent to which such repeated foregrounding

of the political achievements of second-wave feminism is fed by narcissistic desires for student approval of 'our' achievements in the recent past. More laudably, it is clearly also motivated by the wish not only to sustain a threatened political tradition but also to point up feminism's considerable critical and theoretical advances in the past two decades

Yet here again, there are problems. As Charlotte Brunsdon points out elsewhere in this issue of *Screen*, the curricular inscription of feminist theory, while a necessary and welcome development, places its own restraints on critical debate. The newly emergent feminist theoretical canon has an internal logic and dynamic of development that may produce it at times as both solipsistic and exclusionary. Consistently privileged in feminist film and literary theory, for instance, is the analysis of textuality and of readership/spectatorship; a focus which may displace attention from the broader dimensions of history, politics and the social.

In that context, it is refreshing to encounter a collection of feminist writings that both productively ruptures the parameters of contemporary feminist film theory and at the same time fosters an awareness of the historicity of feminist theory itself – of its rootedness, that is, in sexual politics beyond the Academy.

Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body sets out to explore how insights from feminist film theory may be brought to bear on the related but distinct domains of costume and fashion. As Jane Gaines suggests in her editorial introduction, feminist film theory's signal contribution to feminist theory more generally is its highlighting of the notion of 'woman' as industrial, aesthetic, and/or patriarchal *construction*: a focus which helps 'clear up the confusion caused by the success of the moving image in putting itself across as the same as the reality to which it refers'. (p. 1) That same 'confusion' between image and reality or identity is of course evident in fashion and costume: thus the latter, according to Gaines, 'defines gender as self-evident or natural and then recedes as "clothing", leaving the connotation "femininity"'. (p. 1)

At the same time, however, the object of study – dress – transforms the framework of debate. As Gaines again argues, costume is distinguished from the cinematic image by its proximity to the *body* as locus of feminine identity. Except in the extreme case of sartorial fetishism – where items of dress (stockings, stiletto heels, suspenders) stand in for a female body whose material presence is deemed threatening – it is the body that lends form, meaning and value to costume. Just as a woman 'is what she wears', so too a dress is nothing without the body of the wearer. That intimate association between dress, body and identity on one level constitutes both fashion and the cinematic art of costuming as technologies of bodily control and disciplinary identity-formation. Thus, for instance, for Laurie Schulze, in her article 'On the muscle', female

bodybuilding in the 1980s represents one of a battery of coercive mechanisms that conspire to produce the hyperefficient 'new woman' as entrepreneurial body-machine. According to the rules of what Schulze terms 'the new fashion of equality', 'the new woman must acquire more assertiveness if she is to compete with men in the labor force' (p. 63).

The fashionable fabrication of the female body, whether through dress or physical training, is by no means uniquely coercive, however. Fashion has also conventionally functioned as a means to manufacture the illusion of 'real' femininity: a vehicle, then, of the art of 'feminine' dissembling. For Jane Gaines, dress and demeanour are thus ultimately distinguished from cinema by their nature as 'complete fabrications of *women's own design*' (p. 2). More than this, the fashionable woman's capacity for illusionism and masquerade undermines, potentially at least, the disciplinary ascription of an essential feminine identity. As Stephen Heath has commented in his reading of Joan Rivière on feminine artifice, 'the identity of the woman – the assumption of "the woman" – slips, which is then enigma, danger, darkness needing light'.¹

It is not only in its emphasis on the body as critical third term in the relation between woman-as-image and feminine identity that *Fabrications* breaks the mould of text-based critiques of representation. The polysemy of the book's title signals its simultaneous focus not only on the 'fabrication' of femininity in dress and image but also on its economic manufacture as fashion commodity. Reprinted in this collection is Charles Eckert's excellent 'The Carole Lombard in Macy's window' (1978). Eckert here explores the symbiosis between the ready-to-wear fashion industry and 1930s Hollywood cinema: the latter functioned, he suggests, as the former's unofficial advertising vehicle. Both Jeanne Allen's analysis of Howard Hawks's *Fig Leaves* (1926) and Charlotte Herzog's particularly illuminating study of the fashion show in film offer semiological evidence of how classical Hollywood cinema positions the spectator as fashion consumer, and harnesses cinematic pleasures to fashion promotion. (Herzog writes engagingly in this context of the 'shopper's eye' as the source of a critical, evaluative audience gaze on onscreen commodities.) Elizabeth Nielsen's study of costumers in Hollywood – 'handmaids of the glamor culture' – as well as Serafina Bathrick's contribution on female statuary, provide further reminders that circuits of exchange of text and image are always simultaneously circuits of commodity production and exchange. Here, attention is focused on the contradiction between the fetishization of femininity as representation and the marginalization of women from the cultural production of the feminine image (Bathrick's concern is thus, for instance, with nineteenth-century industrial fairs, where the absence of artworks by women sat uneasily with an abundance of monuments to national

1 Stephen Heath, 'Joan Rivière and the masquerade', in Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan (eds), *Formations of Fantasy* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 50.

splendour as actualized in colossal statues of American 'women')

Fabrications' displacement of attention from cinema to fashion thus poses an implicit challenge to existing feminist cultural criticism. Demanded here is a mode of analysis that takes account not only of language, text and image, but on the one hand of the body and on the other of economic relations of commodity production and exchange. Importantly, this involves more than a shift in object of study – from film to fashion – for what the collection also documents and/or argues for is a transformation of the *politics* of feminist critiques of representation. There is, however, a perceptible unevenness of political focus in the contributions presented here. While some writers (Turim, Bathrick) apparently attribute to the cultural text the capacity to subjugate its readers/consumers to dominant forms, others – most obviously Elizabeth Wilson in her outspoken (if not entirely unfamiliar) polemic against the 'traditional Left puritanism' that condemns the fashion system as oppressive – are more concerned to examine what forms of female pleasure, agency and resistance have been enacted in fashion, film and body cultures through the twentieth century.

This analytical asymmetry, while perhaps a weakness of the collection, at the same time usefully reminds the reader of the positioning of this body of work within larger sexual-political debates. The 1982 Barnard conference (whose proceedings were published in the edited collection *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*²) is referenced by Jane Gaines as crystallizing a general move within feminism – a move which *Fabrications* also documents – beyond early theories of textual manipulation to a recognition of the political ambiguities of sexual/textual pleasures. One might add, placing the argument in a broader frame, that it is not only in the international conference culture of academic feminism that the sea change Gaines references has been evident since the early 1980s. In both Britain and the United States, that shift was equally and more crucially a response to a general swing to the right in Anglo-American sexual politics. With the support of successive Republican and Conservative governments, the moral right in both countries has busied itself for ten years now with policing the social and sexual rights and pleasures of marginalized constituencies – amongst whom, in this instance, we must include women – through recent attacks on abortion rights on both sides of the Atlantic, Section 28 and subsequent onslaughts on civil liberties for lesbians and gay men in Britain, and so on. And as women's rights, desires and pleasures have come increasingly under attack, so feminists have had to address the often troubling question of how to construct a feminist politics of pleasure – a politics that refuses complicity with the repressive moralism of the right while simultaneously avoiding the libertarian and/or consumerist conflation of pleasure *per se* with political freedom.

2 Carole S. Vance (ed.), *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984)

How then are these questions addressed in the Gaines and Herzog collection? These broader shifts in the focus of sexual-political debate can be seen here to have impacted on the feminist critique of representation in two ways. They are visible first in the feminist take-up of cultural studies, with its emphasis on readerly agency in image consumption. Angela McRobbie's study of dance epitomizes the cultural studies impulse to identify popular representations and social pleasures as vehicles of an (albeit restricted and compromised) resistance. For McRobbie, the female fantasies embodied in dance (her focus is on prepubescent ballet narratives and popular dance movies for adolescents) offer a 'symbolic escape route' (p. 45), not only from the restrictions of a subordinated femininity, but equally from constraints of class and ethnic identity. Drawing on the arguments of black critics that 'black dance addresses the body in a different register from that of formal or folk dance' (p. 44), as well as on social histories of working-class leisure which suggest that dance has figured here too as a 'form of self-expression a way of speaking through the body' (p. 42), McRobbie sets out to demonstrate how dance may function in analogous ways for teenage girls, allowing them moments, if only fleeting ones, of physical, cultural and psychic agency. Thus dance operates, as the author puts it, 'as a metaphor for an external reality which is unconstrained by the limits and expectations of gender identity and which successfully and painlessly transports its subjects from a passive to an active psychic position' (p. 45).

The impact of cultural studies on earlier critiques of textual domination is most clearly dramatized in Laurie Schulze's work on female bodybuilding. Concerned initially with the coercive aspects of muscle culture for women, the author breaks frame mid-way, using impromptu ethnography (interviews with acquaintances), as well as cultural studies theoretical accounts of the body as locus of resistance (by John Fiske and others) to interrogate her own assumptions of seamless female subjugation.

Schulze's conclusion – that the politics of cultural forms is always ambiguous and historically contingent – is echoed by a second (and to my mind more successfully developed) set of arguments that threads its way through the collection. Noted in the introduction is the centrality to feminist film studies of theories of spectatorship: theories which have, as Jane Gaines puts it, 'two lines of descent' in feminism (p. 21). The first is Laura Mulvey's account of voyeuristic looking, in which the cinema appears as Oedipal apparatus organized around a patriarchal regime of looking. The second, traceable through the early work of Claire Johnston to Mary Ann Doane and, latterly, to Miriam Hansen and others, is the paradigm of 'masquerade', conceived by Gaines as 'a reaction against theories of voyeurism and fetishism which posit a generic male spectator'. (pp. 23–4) What is important about the notion of masquerade is its

capacity (analogously with cultural studies, albeit now in psychoanalytic mode) to open up questions of female pleasure and agency in textual consumption.

There are two senses in which cinematic or sartorial masquerade may be read, it is suggested here, as a route towards more progressive forms of feminine identification. In the first instance, the masquerade, whether in its form as spectatorial or onscreen crossdressing – addressed in Gaylyn Studlar's discussion of the image of Dietrich – or simply as sartorial excess (as in Jane Gaines's discussion of costume extravagance in Hollywood melodrama), ruptures the naturalized association between the image/costume, the female body and feminine identity. In a virtuoso treatment of costume and narrative, Jane Gaines shows how costume, in classical Hollywood realism, works together with other elements of *mise-en-scene* to naturalize the relation between image and self. That use of costume, she points out, meshes with the broader ideological project of realist narrative, insofar as it bolsters essentialist conceptions of personhood based on an assumed continuity between inner and outer – self and costume. There are other cinematic contexts, however, in which costume functions to fracture the assumed identity between dress and personhood. For Gaines, both the star system and melodrama must be seen as repositories of excess which contradict what she terms the 'assimilation' in realist film narrative of 'bodily signifiers' into an assumed natural – and of course gendered – character.

Already discernible, then, at the level of genre and narrative form, are moments in which the masquerade – identified by Gaines in melodrama's 'sartorial effulgence' – undermines the dominant ascription of an essentially passive femininity to women. A second sense in which masquerade may offer 'subversive spectatorial possibilities' is outlined by Gaylyn Studlar in her study of masochism, masquerade and Marlene Dietrich. Studlar draws on Gilles Deleuze's account of masochism as both mother-centred and preoedipal to argue – against Mulvey – that the fetishization of the female image on screen must be understood not as an index of Oedipal fears of castration in a male spectator but of a preoedipal, and *feminine* drive towards maternal symbiosis. The cinematic evidence for her argument is provided by Dietrich's films, in which, she argues, spectatorial access is offered to Dietrich's image crucially *without* the mediation of a male gaze on the female protagonist. For Studlar, the fetishistic treatment of Dietrich and other powerful onscreen women 'reflects an idealization of the mother, the disavowal of her separateness and the wish for reunion with her (resymbiosis)' (p. 235). Significantly too, the female stars Studlar references are all notable for their use of the masquerade to dramatic effect: they represent part of 'a process in which the woman obtains power through her knowledge of how others see

her' (p. 243) The masquerade sustains the masochistic spectatorial position outlined by Studlar, insofar as it helps 'maintain the dialectical play of distance and closeness necessitated by the subject's ambivalence towards the symbiotic union of mother and subject/child' (p. 244)

Theories of masquerade are thus mobilized in *Fabrications* to challenge accounts of cinema and costume as intrinsically patriarchal systems of representation, and to foreground female agency in the reading of the film or fashion text. The collection is compelling, and in some cases exemplary, for the rigour and persuasiveness in particular of its argument that feminists need to recognize and grapple with the political ambiguities of these consumerist pleasures. It is perhaps appropriate, however, to sound a note of dissent – or at least of caution. One of the key weaknesses of cultural studies accounts of consumption has been their over easy conflation of pleasure and cultural agency with resistance. It is by no means clear, for instance – though arguments to this effect have certainly been mounted – that gender crossdressing by either women or men should necessarily be seen, once it has entered high-street fashion, as part of a culture of sexual-political opposition. The political meanings of consumer practices are always historically bound, dependent in part, and obviously, on the different cultural-political parameters of separate acts of consumption (crudely, power dressing amongst Tory feminists is quite differently inflected from, say, the lesbian activist donning lipstick and high heels for a television interview on sexual deviance). The politics of consumption shift, too, in relation to the placing of consumer practices in politicoeconomic power relations. Quite rightly, Jane Gaines's introduction questions the interpretation of every act of consumption solely as an act of meaning-making: hence, no doubt, the book's emphasis on the simultaneous nature of reading/consuming as both cultural and economic exchange or appropriation. Yet ultimately none of the contributions quite specifies how holding in mind the economic dimensions of, say, fashion consumption might influence the politics this collection apparently embraces – which is in the end either a semiotic politics of readerly agency and resistance and/or a politics of feminine psychic power and agency.

What remains absent from these and similar feminist arguments for female agency as political goal is any account of how escape from positions of gender subordination may constitute 'women' as agents of equally repressive forms of social (class, race, sexual) power and domination. Black critiques of white feminist cultural 'subversion' have shown, for instance, how white feminism has appropriated black cultural forms – music, dance, dress, amongst others – to challenge dominant models of white femininity, while still evading political identification with antiracism. Equally palpable are the ambiguities of fashionable dressing as mode of consumerist

'resistance' While such strategies as masquerade and transvestism may unsettle naturalized modes of gender identification, they may well position the fashion consumer as the subject of economic domination (avant-garde fashion, as is well known, is regularly dependent, for instance, on women's homeworking, often under conditions of extreme economic exploitation)

The answer here is not simply a renunciation of consumerism *per se* (an impossibility in any case in western market economies). What is, however, required is some exploration of how a feminist politics of representation such as that espoused in *Fabrications* may lock into a broader politics of consumption a politics that not only aims to achieve active subject positions for women, but also challenges the equation of gendered agency with class, race or sexual domination To put this another way the ethical evaluation of relations between on the one hand the consuming subject and on the other the 'others' against whom she/he is economically and politically defined must surely be a key element in a feminist politics of consumption The elaboration of a feminist ethics of consumption is, then, arguably the next step forward from the politics of representation and identity embraced by Games, Studlar and others. They are to be thanked for preparing the ground so eloquently

review:

Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*. London: Verso, 1990, 94pp.

PAUL McDONALD

At the June 1989 Institute of Contemporary Arts conference, 'Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Situationists', the 'spectre' of Guy Debord haunted the proceedings. Debord's infamy is founded upon the leading role he played in that group of cultural agitators, the Situationist International. Through a body of writings which took the Continental domain of cultural theory into new territories, Debord became the chief polemicist of the SI. His most significant intervention came in 1967 with the publication of *The Society of the Spectacle*, which stood alongside Raoul Vaneigem's *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes generations* (published in English under the title *The Revolution of Everyday Life*) as the specto-Situationist critique of life under late capitalism.¹ Justified or not, following the Gaullist clampdown in the following year Debord's text acquired the reputation of acting as a symptom for the discontents which triggered the events of May '68. The book became the prophetic text and Debord was the seer. Twenty years later, the 'expert' on the spectacle contributes further to the debate with *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (published in France in 1988 as *Commentaries sur la société du spectacle*). The new text is not so much a supplement to the original critique as a report which details transformations in the spectacular formation.

The Society of the Spectacle was a collection of 211 theses which explained 'the spectacle' as the reified realm of commodity accumulation which interpellates the worker/spectator in an alienation drama of property and loss. For this economy, use value

¹ I am indebted to Stewart Home *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War* (London: Aporia and Unpopular Books, 1988), p. 44 for detailing the difference between the Debordist faction of specto-Situationists who believed in the theory of the spectacle and the group collected around Jorgen Nash which formed the Second Situationist International after the original International split in March 1962.

2 This and all subsequent references are taken from the edition of *The Society of the Spectacle* published by Rebel Press/AIM Publications in 1987

has disappeared to be replaced by the performance of the spectacle in the image of exchange. The effect of this upon human relations is to create 'pseudo-needs' which replace the consumption of illusions for being: 'The abundant commodity stands for the total breach in the organic development of social needs. Its mechanical accumulation liberates *unlimited artificiality*, in the face of which living desire is helpless. The cumulative power of independent artificiality sows everywhere the *falsification of social life*. (thesis 68)² In this sphere of falsification the fundamental alienation of the spectacle is therefore between the images of possession by which relations are formed and the reality of that separation: 'The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images' (thesis 4)

It is in the image that capital accumulates and becomes visible. The operation of the spectacle is complete only to the degree that it succeeds in positioning the spectator in passive contemplation of its panorama. Although the spectacle bears contradictions between components, it forms a unity at the level of keeping all spectators equally in contemplative isolation.

Through his work with Pierre Canjuers, Debord was briefly in contact with the 'Socialisme ou barbarie' group during the early sixties. This influence can be traced as Debord advances a programme for challenging the spectacle by adopting Cornelius Castoriades's (alias Paul Cardan) valorization of self-managing Workers' Councils, based on the model of solidarity formed during the Hungarian uprising of 1956. In the Workers' Councils Debord believed an alternative experience of historical consciousness and unification was found which counters the alienation and separation at the foundation of the spectacular malaise. The failure of any establishment of Workers' Councils after May '68 suggests that the part *The Society of the Spectacle* actually played in those events was at most to provide a radical stimulus to the students who then neglected the solution it proposed.

Comments on the Society of the Spectacle breaks with the utopian possibilities the earlier text offered. It would have been interesting to have Debord detour into his own reflections upon that past, but in the absence of such comment it must be inferred that, faced with the consolidation of a new spectacular formation, he now regards the optimistic strategies he formerly proposed as bankrupt. Here Debord seems concerned only with how the new spectacle appears, rather than with how it might be opposed.

In the intervening twenty years a new constellation of power has been founded. Previously two orders of power operated in respective spectacular forms, peaceably coexisting within the theatrics of the Cold War. 'Concentrated spectacle' was exemplified by the bureaucratic capitalism of the Soviet Union, where the concentration of power was controlled by an inner party overseen by

the 'celebrity' figure styled on the Stalinist model. 'Diffuse spectacle' was the competition of commodities in the free market economy, exemplified by the United States. The spectacle in its new form is an integration of these previous regimes. Probably the image which would best contain what Debord is proposing as the 'integrated spectacle' is that of Soviet citizens queueing at McDonald's in Moscow. The integrated spectacle operates in that space where the diffuse spectacle has emerged victorious over the stunted commodity production of the concentrated spectacle.

Debord's thesis is outside the current liberal consensus which embraces a movement towards multiplying sexual, racial, gender and national differences; for he adamantly declares that the integrated spectacle is a totality which equalizes all experiences. With the diffuse and the concentrated, parts of society still escaped the spectacle, and a space was allowed for the expression of radical strategies of protest and opposition. With the integrated spectacle nothing escapes it, and opposition has disappeared as all political pretenders bid for the same portion of power to control the spectacle in its contemporary form.

Recently, Situationist texts have been criticized as 'very difficult to read, difficult to concentrate on . . . very loose stitched, theoretically porous, exciting rather than informative'.³ Certainly, much of *The Society of the Spectacle* is dense and obscure. By comparison *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* is light reading, and the clarity which emerges from Malcolm Imrie's translation would suggest Debord has decided to become more accessible. Although it would be wrong to group *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* with the Situationist project, over and above any informational content it may deliver, the book still begs questions around whether or not that project is an 'exciting' one.

While New Left radicals may have dismissed 'the conspiracy theory of history' (p. 59) as a thriller narrative which exaggerates totalitarian control, Debord holds that the state has exploited this disbelief in the knowledge that its conspiratorial excesses will be free from social critique. Twenty years have perfected falsification to the point that machinations which were formerly kept clandestine can now perform visibly unhindered in the spectacle. So Debord's new 'notes from underground' place conspiracy as central to relations in modern society. The result is that the integrated spectacle sets an 'exciting' agenda of assassinations, disinformation, secrecy and surveillance, which replaces the former agenda of accumulation, separation and contemplation.

One perfection of the integrated spectacle has been the increased production of convincing disinformation, and this is the context in which Debord must locate his text. The text shifts continually between the 'exciting' and the 'informative', between the narrative of conspiracy anecdotes (Dr Archambeau of Poitiers and '*les tueurs*

3 Art & Language 'Ralph the Situationist' *Artscribe International* (November/December, 1987) reproduced in Iwona Blazwick (ed.) *An endless adventure an endless banquet A Situationist Scrapbook* (London: Verso/ICA Publications, 1989) p. 93

fous de Brabant – ‘the mad killers of Brabant’ – for example) and commentary on the consolidation of integrated spectacular power. Debord expects that this framework will be supplemented by the reader’s knowledges. The opening section declares that the text includes ‘decoys’, ‘secret clauses’ and some intentional omissions, so that if the overall meaning is to appear then it will require the insertion of additional pages. For this reviewer, the gaps would be filled by those who have been influenced by the original Situationist critique, particularly Baudrillard. Between ‘[The Spectacle] is not a supplement to the real world, an additional decoration. It is the heart of the unrealism of the real society’ (*Society of the Spectacle*, thesis 6) and ‘the globalisation of the false was also the falsification of the globe’ (*Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, p. 10), the signifier has superseded representation in simulation, to ‘threaten the difference between “true” and “false”, between “real” and “imaginary”’.⁴

⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983) p. 5

In the post-Baudrillardian context, Debord’s writing no longer appears prophetic but locked in the indulgences of those pessimistic schools of postmodernism for which *The Society of the Spectacle* may have been the formative hypothesis. The ‘exciting’ agenda of the integrated spectacle is guilty of constructing a monolithic edifice which seductively invites the abandonment of criticism, opposition and hope. This is not enough. The fatalistic totality of the integrated spectacle does not exist. Aside from the obvious objections which could be raised to Debord’s Eurocentric, First World perspective, the logic of the spectacle has developed not towards unification but towards recognition of difference in the post-Fordist market. Nor has it reduced all experiences to the same level of banality; for complementing the diversity in the market, opposition has become reformulated in microstrategies at the level of the personal, and we should not mistake the dominance of the spectacle for the victory of the spectacle.